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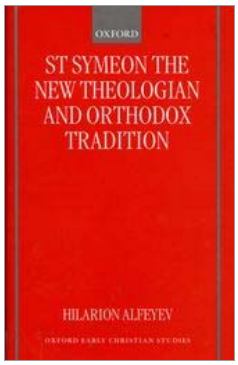

St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition

Hilarion Alfeyev

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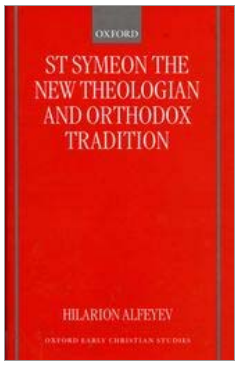

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Hilarion Alfeyev

Easter 1995

Oxford

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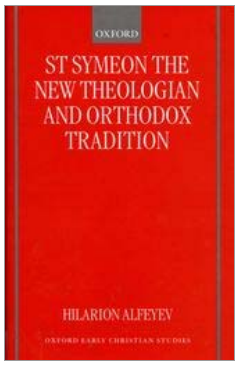

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List of Abbreviations

Source: St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition

- *ACO*
  Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum, ed. E. Schwartz (Berlin and Leipzig, 1924–40).
- *CCG*
  Corpus Christianorum, series graeca (Tournhout- Paris).
- *CCL*
  Corpus Christianorum, series latina (Tournhout- Paris).
- *DHGE*
  Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques (Paris, 1912-).
- *DOP*
  Dumbarton Oaks Papers (Washington).
- *DSp*
  Dictionnaire de spiritualité ed. M. Viller (Paris, 1932–).
- *DTC*
  Dictionnaire de théologie catholique, ed. A. Vacant, E. Mangenot, and E. Ammann (Paris, 1903–50).
- *ECQ*
  Eastern Churches Quarterly (Ramsgate).
- *ECR*
  Eastern Churches Review (London).
- *GCS*
  Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller (Leipzig-Berlin).
- *LTK*
  Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche, 2nd edn. (Freiburg i. B., 1957–).
- *NRTh*
  Nouvelle revue théologique (Tournai).
- *OC*
  Orientalia Christiana (Rome)

- *OCA*
  Orientalia Christiana Analecta (Rome).
- *OCP*
  Orientalia Christiana Periodica (Rome).
- *ODByz*
  The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium, ed. A. Kazhdan (Oxford, 1993).
- *PG*
  Patrologiae cursus completus, series graeca, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris).
- *PGL*
  A Patristic Greek Lexicon, ed. G. W. H. Lampe (Oxford, 1991).
- *PL*
  Patrologiae cursus completus, series latina, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris).
- *PO*
  Patrologia Orientalis, ed. R. Graffin and F. Nau (Paris).
- *PTS*
  Patristische Texte und Studien, ed. K. Aland and E. Mühlenberg (Berlin-New York).
- **(p. xiii)** *REB*
  Revue des études byzantines (Paris).
- *ROC*
  Revue de l'Orient chrétien (Paris).
- *RSR*
  Recherches de sciences religieuses (Paris).
- *SB*
  Supplementa byzantina (Berlin).
- *SC*
  Sources Chrétiennes (Paris).
- *TU*
  Texte und Untersuchungen (Leipzig-Berlin).
- Εὐεργτινός
  Εὐεργτινός, ἤτοι Συναγιωγή τω῀ν θεοφθόγγων ῥημάτων καὶ διδασκαλιν τω῀ν θεοφόρων καὶ ἁγίων Πατέρων, vols. 1–4 (Athens, 1990).
- Φιλοκαλία
  Φιλοκαλία τω῀ν ἱερω῀ν νηπτικω῀ν, Vols. I –5 (Athens,1957–63).

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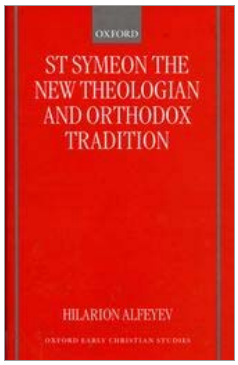

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(p. xiv) 'How is it', someone says, 'that none of the great Fathers has spoken so explicitly about himself, or spoken such words as you speak about yourself?' O man, you deceive yourself! On the contrary, *the Apostles and the Fathers have spoken things that are in harmony with my words*... You should see and test what we say. And if we do not think the same things that the Apostles and the holy and God-inspired Fathers did, if we speak contrary to what they said, if we do not repeat what the Holy Gospels say about God...then let me be anathema from the Lord God...and you, on your part, not only shut your ears to prevent them from hearing it, but even stone me and kill me as an ungodly man and an atheist! In fact, however, *we restore the teaching of the Master and the Apostles that some have perverted*...

Symeon the New Theologian (*Cat.* 34. 184–262)

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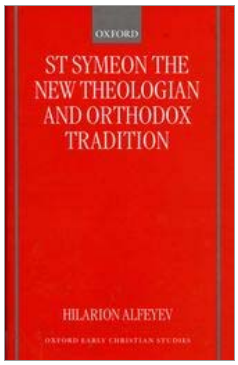

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Introduction

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Abstract and Keywords

Symeon the New Theologian is one of the most outstanding Fathers of the Eastern Church. Almost ten centuries after his death, his teachings on the vision of God as light, on sanctity and dispassion, on ecstasy and deification, still attract many Christians who find inspiration in his writings. This book argues that in Symeon we find a mysticism that is absolutely traditional, in the Orthodox sense of the term. It attempts to determine Symeon's place in Orthodox tradition, to find out his background, and to compare his teaching with that of his predecessors. The focus is mostly on such aspects of his theology as have not been specially discussed in the existing literature, including his biblical approach, that is, his understanding of Scripture and his exegetical method; his attitude towards church worship and its influence on him.

Keywords: Symeon the New Theologian, Eastern Church, Orthodox tradition, God, deification, mysticism, Scripture, church worship, Studite, theology

Symeon the New Theologian is one of the most outstanding Fathers of the Eastern Church. He is now commonly regarded as a great 'mystic of fire and light',[1] a forerunner of Byzantine Hesychasm. Some scholars call him 'the greatest of the Byzantine mystical writers'.[2] Others speak of his 'tremendous relevance' for modern man.[3] Almost ten centuries after his death, his teachings on the vision of God as light, on sanctity and dispassion, on ecstasy and deification still attract many Christians, who find inspiration in his writings.

Yet Symeon is also one of the most controversial writers of the entire Christian tradition. He was granted the name of 'the New Theologian', which, though finally transformed into an honourable appellation, might well have been

given to him originally by his opponents as an offensive nickname, to emphasize the dangerous novelty of his theology.[4] During his lifetime he was many times **(p. 2)** accused of nothing less than a heresy. For years he lived in conflict with the official church authorities and in his old age was expelled from Constantinople. He had both quite a number of adherents and many enemies. His teaching was subject to heated debates not only during his lifetime but also after his death. His works were never forgotten and were in fact quite popular among the Orthodox monks of many centuries; outside the monastic milieu, however, his name was until the last few decades hardly mentioned even by scholars in Byzantine history and culture.

The rediscovery of Symeon is a recent phenomenon. His rich literary legacy, which includes 3 Theological Discourses, 15 Ethical Discourses, 34 Catechetical Discourses, 2 Thanksgivings, 225 Chapters, 4 Epistles, and 58 Hymns, has only quite lately become available for scholarly analysis.[5] This is why, although Symeon is now considered by Byzantine scholars to be one of the most important objects of study, the literature on him is still rather limited. It includes only a few monographs, of which that by Archbishop Basil Krivochéine[6] is the best known, being widely appreciated as an adequate and comprehensive exposition of Symeon's life, doctrine, and spirituality.[7]

In modern scholarship Symeon has been presented as a prominent mystical writer, but his relationship to Orthodox tradition has not yet been fully investigated.[8] The interest in Symeon primarily as a **(p. 3)** mystic, with the simultaneous underestimation of the traditional character of his teaching, might be explained partly by the Western influence on the modern scholarly approach to Symeon. For the study of mysticism in general it is a commonplace to regard the mystic as 'the great religious rebel who undermines the orthodox establishment, placing his own experience above all the doctrines of the accepted authorities, and who not infrequently engenders serious opposition even to the point of being put to death for heresy'.[9] To a certain degree this view would correspond to medieval Western mysticism, which often became an individualistic and enthusiastic, sometimes almost protestant, movement opposed to the formal, rationalistic, and traditional 'orthodoxy'. There is a tendency among scholars to transfer this understanding of mysticism to Symeon and present him as a writer whose conceptions 'smacked of Messalianism',[10] contained 'doubtful orthodoxy',[11] and were close to protestantism.[12] One scholar even found in Symeon's 'Chapters' 'a startling similarity to Neo-Paulician and Bogomil beliefs'.[13]

It is obvious that Symeon's own mystical experience was a primary source of his theological and literary inspiration. It is also true that Symeon had a conflict with the representatives of the 'official' Church: this makes his case somewhat similar to that of some **(p. 4)** Western mystics. But was Symeon really attempting to oppose his personal experience to the experience of his Church and place it 'above all the doctrines' of traditional Orthodoxy? Should his conflict be regarded as a clash between him and tradition, or was it in fact a debate about the nature of the tradition itself, which was understood in different ways by Symeon and by his opponents? It is my conviction that in Symeon we find a mysticism which is absolutely traditional, in the Orthodox sense of the term, and I shall try to prove this in the course of this study. It must be then a study of the mystical nature of tradition and the traditional nature of mysticism, and of Symeon as both a highly personal and at the same time very traditional ecclesiastical figure.

This study is conceived as a continuation of the work of Archbishop Basil Krivochéine in the direction outlined by him. When finishing his book on Symeon, he wrote:

> Having reached the end of our study, we are still faced with the same difficult questions: who is Symeon? Exactly what does his name 'The New Theologian' mean? How could such a figure arise in the Byzantine world? Where does he come from; what place does he occupy in Orthodox spirituality and in Orthodoxy in general?[14]

What follows is an attempt to answer some of these questions, namely to determine, as far as possible, the place of Symeon in Orthodox tradition, to find out his background, and to compare his teaching with that of his predecessors. This research must, therefore, be focused on those features of Orthodox tradition that conditioned Symeon's development as a theologian and on the points of correspondence between Symeon's views and traditional doctrines.

I shall concentrate mostly on such aspects of his theology as have not been specially discussed in the existing literature. Symeon's biblical approach has never been precisely analysed, that is, his understanding of Scripture and his exegetical method. His attitude towards church worship and its influence on him have not yet been investigated.

His place in the Studite tradition, that is the tradition of the Stoudios monastery in Constantinople, where Symeon began his monastic vocation, has not been defined. The personality of his spiritual father, Symeon the Studite, still remains obscure, and the original text of his only known writing, the 'Ascetical Discourse', has never been studied. The connection between Symeon the New **(p. 5)** Theologian and patristic tradition as a whole has been only partly clarified. Symeon's knowledge of hagiographical literature and its influence on him have not been examined. Some important parts of his own doctrine, such as his anthropology and triadology (or trinitarian theology), have been left aside by scholars. Without claiming to fill in all these gaps in the existing studies on Symeon, I shall attempt to break new ground on the basis of original research.

This study will proceed by tracing Symeon's concepts back to their possible origins in tradition. This is why, seeking parallels between Symeon and preceding Fathers, I shall focus my attention primarily on those writers who were or may have been known to Symeon rather than on the authors who are *now* commonly regarded as great mystics of the early Church. When studying Symeon, one is surprised not to find in him any significant dependence on the key writers of the formative period of mystical theology,[15] such as Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Dionysios the Areopagite, not to speak of Plato, Philo, and Plotinus, who are virtually ignored by Symeon together with the whole of the Neo-Platonist tradition. On the other hand, one finds that Symeon's thought was influenced by the theology of Gregory Nazianzen, who was extremely popular throughout the history of Byzantium, but who is not that significant for a modern reader of mystical theology. This study will be mainly concerned with exploring the channels of tradition that directly influenced Symeon, such as the writings of Gregory Nazianzen, which Symeon read and quoted, or those of Symeon the Studite, who was his spiritual father, as well as the variety of scriptural, liturgical, hagiographic, and ascetical texts which were read in the church offices. Without entirely excluding indirect evidence, much less attention will be paid to the authors who seem not to have been of great significance for Symeon.

As this study deals with mysticism and tradition, let us explain briefly what these two terms will entail in the course of this research.

Mysticism in general is, according to A. Louth's definition, 'a search for and experience of immediacy with God'.[16] In fact, the word 'mysticism' is alien to Orthodox usage as it does not occur in the writings of the church Fathers. However, it is derived from the Greek adjective *μυστικός* (hidden, secret), which occurs very often **(p. 6)** in patristic literature in general,[17] and in Symeon in particular. The latter speaks of 'mystical illumination'[18] 'mystical contemplation',[19] 'ineffable mystical visions',[20] 'mystical radiance',[21] 'mystical union' with Christ.[22] Thus, in many cases in Symeon the adjective *μυστικός* refers to experience connected with the vision of God as uncreated light. This gives us the right to employ the phrase 'mystical experience' as an equivalent to the 'vision of the divine light' or 'vision of God', and the word 'mystic' as designating a person who has experience of this vision. The word 'mysticism' will mean both someone's personal experience of the vision of God (or of 'immediacy with God'), and his attitude to this experience as expressed in his writings ('mystical doctrine').

As regards the word 'tradition', it will be used with the meaning of the Greek patristic term *παράδοσις*. Athanasios speaks of

> the very tradition [*παράδοσις*], teaching and faith of the Universal Church [*καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας*] from the very beginning, which the Lord gave, the Apostles preached, and the Fathers preserved.[23]

John of Damascus indicates that *παράδοσις* consists of both written and unwritten sources,[24] and defines it as 'the eternal principles [*ὅροι*] that our Holy Fathers determined'.[25] On the basis of these definitions one can say that tradition is the living continuity of doctrine, spirituality, and experience, which derive from Christ and are preserved over the centuries. In Orthodox usage, tradition is normally conceived of as including the Old and New Testaments, orally delivered Christian teaching, transmitted from generation to generation, liturgical worship with its customs and rites, the Creeds and rules of faith, the acts of the Ecumenical Councils, the writings of the church Fathers, the lives of saints, and finally the personal spiritual experience of each believer from the beginning of Christianity up to the present. In other words, it includes the entirety of the centuries-old experience of the Universal Church.[26]

This study will in fact deal with the Eastern tradition: not because **(p. 7)** Eastern is equivalent to Orthodox,[27] but only because the Eastern tradition appears to have been more or less self-sufficient and independent of the West. The world of Eastern Christianity long before the formal division of the Universal Church into two parts around the

eleventh century had its own theological terminology and its own way of thinking, which were largely unaffected by external influence. It was conditioned to a significant degree by the usage of Greek, the dominant language of the Eastern part of the Roman Empire. This is why mainly Byzantine Greek texts will be used, with only occasional references to Latin sources; some attention will be paid to Syriac sources, but normally to those which might have influenced, in their Greek versions, the development of Byzantine theological thought in general and Symeon in particular.

With regard to quotations, I shall sometimes use existing transltions,[28] but in many cases, where existing ones are inadequate in some way, or where there is no translation, I shall use my own. In referring to ancient authors, I shall use the traditional nomenclature of the Eastern Church, such as Makarios of Egypt instead of Pseudo-Macarius (or Macarius/Symeon), and Dionysios the Areopagite instead of Pseudo-Dionysius, without special discussion of the question of authenticity of their writings. The titles of patristic writings will usually be given in English translation and in abbreviation.[29]

Notes:

(1) Cf. Maloney, *Mystic*, title.

(2) Cf. Krivochéine, *Light*, 9.

(3) Maloney, 'Introduction', 36.

(4) Cf. Krivochéine, 'Writings', 325–6. In the Byzantine tradition the appellation *καινὸς θεολόγος* ('new theologian') bears sharp negative implications: see Wirth, 'Theologos', 126–7. Thus, Gregory of Nyssa called the heretic Eunomios *καινὸς θεολόγος*, 'the new theologian': see *Eunom*. 1. 250 [i. 100]; 2. 42 [i. 238]; 3. 8. 9 [ii. 242]; 3. 2. 8 [ii. 54]. Symeon himself used the expression *καινὸς θεολόγος* to reproach his opponent in *Theol*.1. 92. Cf. similar usage in Gregory Palamas, who calls his opponent 'this new theologian' because he had departed from the tradition of the Fathers: *Triads* 3. 2. 4 [659]. One can perceive a slight difference in tone between *καινός* and *νέος*, but the second adjective may also bear negative connotations. Nikitas Stithatos, for example, opposes 'the new teachers' (*νέοι διδάσκαλοι*) to the church Fathers: see *Limits* 28 [392]. H.-G. Beck suggested that Symeon was for his contemporaries both 'Symeon the New' and 'Symeon the Theologian', and only later these two appellations were merged into a single *ὁ Νέος Θεολόγος*: cf. 'Symeon', 59 ff.; *Literatur*, 585 ff. In this case 'the New' would be a standard appellation given by Byzantines to recent saints in order to distinguish them from the ancient ones who bear the same name (cf. Hilarion the New, Stephen the Younger, etc.). However, B. Krivochéine, arguing from the fact that the expression 'the New Theologian' is contained in the earliest manuscripts of the 'Catechetical Discourses', asserts that this was the initial appellation of Symeon, which was only later transformed in some manuscripts into 'the New and the Theologian': see 'Writings', 315–27; cf. *SC 96*, 154–6.

(5) It was critically edited, except the 'Epistles', in 1957–73 by J. Darrouzès, B. Krivochéine, J. Koder, J. Paramelle and L. Neyrand in 9 volumes of the *Sources chrétiennes* series (see Bibliography). As to the 'Epistles', the first of them was edited by K. Holl: see *Enthusiasmus*, 110–27. *Ep*. 2–4 are not yet published: for their text we used the 16th-century manuscript *Vatic, gr*. 1782, foil. 205V. –230 (having also consulted some other manuscripts). Before the *SC* edition, Symeon's works were only available in the edition by Dionysios Zagoraios (1782), who published the original text of Symeon's 'Hymns' and an inadequate Modern Greek translation of his 'Discourses' and 'Chapters'.

(6) See Krivochéine, *Light*.

(7) Among other major scholarly works on Symeon are: Holl, *Enthusiasmus*; Biedermann, *Menschenbild*; Völker, *Praxis*; Turner, *Fatherhood*. An outline of some major themes of Symeon's mystical theology can be found in Špidlik, 'Symeon', *DSp* 14, 1387–1401; Maloney, *Mystic*. Among the books and articles which deal with some particular aspects of Symeon's doctrine and spirituality there are: Hausherr, *Mystique*; idem, *Direction*; Fraigneau-Julien, *Sens*; Hatzopoulos, *Two Outstanding Cases*; Ware, 'Father'; idem, 'Mystery'; Kazhdan, 'Zamechaniya'; idem, 'System'; McGuckin, 'Symeon'; idem, 'Renewal'. Several theses on Symeon have been written, in particular: Stathopoulos, *Gottesliebe*; Deppe, *Christ*; Rossum, *Problem*; Lascaris, *Liberation*; Theodoropoulos, *Love of God*. Some other pieces of literature on Symeon will be referred to in the course of our study.

(8) In B. Krivochéine's *Light* Symeon is presented almost totally without reference to tradition. The most precise investigation into the connection between Symeon and the tradition is still W. Völker's *Praxis*, but it deals only with Symeon's asceticism and mysticism; other studies, such as those by B. Fraigneau-Julien, H. Turner, and A. Hatzopoulos, examine particular questions. Besides, all these authors when searching for parallels to Symeon limit themselves to patristic writings, which constitute altogether only a part of Orthodox tradition; as we shall see, in the case of Symeon patristic literature was not the only important feature of his background.

(9) Katz, *Mysticism*, 3.

(10) Mango, *Byzantium*, 119. Cf. Bois, 'Hésychastes', 8–10. Symeon was presented as a Messalian in Allatius, *Diatriba*, and Deppe, *Christ* (see Bibliography).

(11) Darrouzès, *SC* 51-bis, 36.

(12) Idem, *SC* 122, 37.

(13) Garsoian, 'Heresy', 107 ff. This paper is an example of how a scholar, on the basis of some external and superficial parallelism in ideas and expressions between Orthodox writers and heretics, provides us as a result with a totally wrong picture of an Orthodox author. Being prompted by the intention 'to show that....both orthodox and heterodox mysticism coexisted, and to recall the perpetual thinness of the line separating orthodoxy from heresy', which is in fact the driving force behind many writings of modern Byzantine and patristic scholars, N. Garsoian produced a list of 'corresponding points' between Symeon's 'Chapters' and the doctrine of Neo-Paulicians (the term has been invented by N. Garsoian herself). She suggests, for example, that Symeon 'rejected' Baptism and hierarchy, which in fact he did not (see our discussion in Chapter 9). The scholar goes so far as to postulate that Symeon's mysticism was 'perhaps affected by the contemporary Byzantine fascination with Satanism': See ibid. 112.

(14) Krivochéine, *Light*, 391.

(15) Cf. Louth, *Origins*, pp. xiff.

(16) Ibid. pp. xv.

(17) Cf. Lampe, *PGL*, 893–4.

(18) *Hymn* 32. 46.

(19) *Hymn* 43. 73; 50. 161; 50. 235.

(20) *Hymn* 30. 149–50.

(21) *Hymn* 55. 6.

(22) *Hymn* 51. 58.

(23) *Serap.* 1. 28 [593 C–596 A].

(24) *Imag.* I. 23 and II. 16 [III].

(25) *Imag.* II. 12 [104]; III. 41 [141].

(26) Cf. Ware, *Church*, 196. On the meaning of 'tradition' see Flesseman-van-Leer, *Tradition*; Hanson, *Tradition*, 7–9, 237–60; Prestige, *Fathers*, 1–22; Kelly, *Doctrines*, 29–51; Florovsky, 'Palamas', 165–71; Meyendorff, *Tradition*, 13–26.

(27) 'Orthodoxy claims to be universal', Bishop Kallistos Ware writes, 'not something exotic or Oriental, but simple Christianity': Ware, *Church*, 8. For Eastern and Western theological approaches see ibid. 44–52.

(28) The list of translations used in the present study is given in the Bibliography.

(29) For their full titles refer to the Bibliography.

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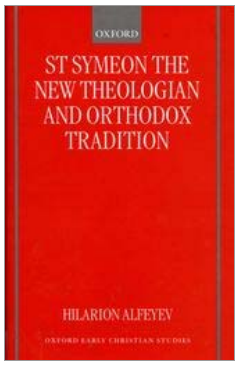

St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition
Hilarion Alfeyev

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The Historical, Monastic, Scriptural, and Liturgical Background of St. Symeon the New Theologian

Source: St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition

(p. 10) Symeon's life covers the last quarter of the tenth century and the first quarter of the eleventh. This means that for most of his life the reigning emperor of Byzantium was Basil II (976–1025), the greatest of the emperors of the Macedonian dynasty. Under his reign, the Byzantine Empire experienced a period of renewed confidence and expansion, pushing its Eastern borders as far as Armenia, and also recovering the great city of Antioch, and in the West incorporating the Bulgarian Empire that had been independent of Byzantium for centuries. Political confidence was matched by religious developments—as witnessed by Mount Athos, where many monasteries enjoyed substantial imperial patronage, as well as by new monastic foundations in the capital.

The epoch in which Symeon lived was also marked by the struggle between the Macedonian dynasty and the emerging military and civilian aristocracy, a struggle in which Basil II still held the upper hand, but which the emperors were destined to lose. Was Symeon's life in any way affected by this struggle? We know that in his early years he served at the imperial court, where he was brought by his uncle; we know that Symeon's uncle 'was suddenly ushered out of life by an extraordinary death',[1] but we do not know exactly what happened: we cannot say whether he became a victim of a coup d'état or fell into disgrace and was executed. In any case, it is difficult to be precise about Symeon's relation to the events of his time, since there is an unresolved scholarly controversy about the precise dates of his birth and death.

Symeon's life overlaps with that of Michael Psellos, 'the first Byzantine humanist',[2] who, in the eleventh century, became a symbol of the cultural revival in Byzantium. This revival was characterized by a renewed interest in classical tradition, by collection and assimilation of the classical inheritance in both literature and art.[3] One doubts, however, whether this had anything to do with what Symeon the New Theologian was preoccupied with for most of his life. His knowledge of classical literature and his involvement in the **(p. 11)** process of its assimilation seems to have been extremely limited. He was certainly not an integral part of the so-called 'Macedonian renaissance', as far as his cultural background is concerned.

What is much more important about Symeon is his monastic background, which was dominated by the practice and

ideas of the famous Studite monastery, and his spiritual father Symeon the Studite (also called the Pious). No less important is Symeon's biblical, liturgical, and patristic background. It is to these matters that we now turn. In what follows Symeon the New Theologian will primarily be considered as a monastic writer and theologian rather than a hero of eleventh-century Byzantium.

Notes:

(1) *Vie* 3. 16.

(2) Haussig, *Byzantine Civilization*, 323.

(3) See Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change*, 141.

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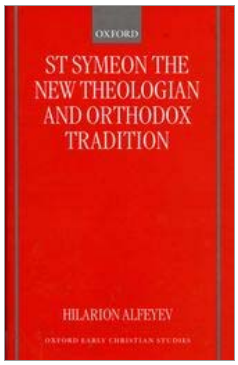

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Symeon the New Theologian in the Context of the Studite Monastic Tradition

Chapter: (p. 12) (p. 13) 1 Symeon the New Theologian in the Context of the Studite Monastic TraditionSt.
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Hilarion Alfeyev

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Abstract and Keywords

The monastery of Stoudios played a decisive role in the life of Symeon the New Theologian. It represented a new kind of urban monasticism in comparison with early Christian monasteries, whether cenobitic or eremitical. The unique history of the Studite monastery, its location in the Byzantine capital, its significance for the defence of the veneration of icons, its liturgical and hymnographical activity, its role in the spiritual direction of people, its influence on Byzantium's politics, its richness and grandeur, and, of course, the great personalities of Theodore and other hegumens and elders gave the Stoudion the central position which the monastery occupied in Byzantine monasticism for several centuries. Although we have no evidence that learning Scripture by heart was compulsory in Studite monasticism, reading books was encouraged and even required. Early monks read books in a contemplative manner just to gain profit for their own souls, whereas the Studites were supposed to be able to bring profit to others, particularly to seculars who asked for spiritual direction.

Keywords: Studite monasticism, Symeon the New Theologian, monasticism, monks, Stoudion, monasteries, spiritual direction, politics, Byzantium, hegumens

1. The Studite Monastery and Its Educational Activity

The monastery of Stoudios[4] played a decisive role in the life of Symeon the New Theologian. Here he met his spiritual father Symeon the Studite, whose influence on him was enormous. Here he began his own monastic path. From here, because of his disobedience towards the hegumen, or abbot, he was expelled eventually to become hegumen himself in another monastery of the same tradition and type. The Stoudion was Symeon the New Theologian's spiritual homeland, and we shall not come to understand his monastic achievements without first

looking at what this monastery meant for him and for Byzantine monasticism in general.

The monastery was founded in the middle of the fifth century, but it is only during the iconoclastic epoch that it became one of the most significant centres of Byzantine monasticism. The monastery and its hegumen Theodore (799–826) played a decisive role in the struggle against iconoclasm and after the final victory over iconoclasm in 843 its authority was extraordinarily high.[5]

This monastery represented a new kind of urban monasticism in comparison with early Christian monasteries, whether cenobitic or eremitical. Monasticism appeared, in particular in fourth-century Egypt, as a flight from the world: thousands of monks joined the monasteries which were established far from populated areas, and only a few ascetics still lived in towns; but in later generations we find an increasing tendency towards a return to the 'world' and the establishment of monasteries inside cities. This was a kind of monastic mission within the world, but it gave the monasteries themselves **(p. 14)** a different colour. They were no longer isolated communities: lay-people attended monastic offices; monks had to carry out the spiritual direction of seculars, have intensive and constant contact with the life of the city, visit people and receive visitors. In the post-iconoclastic epoch the transformation of monasticism from an 'enthusiastic' movement into a special class within the Eastern Church was completed, and this class has occupied a leading position in the Church ever since.[6]

The unique history of the Studite monastery, its location in the Byzantine capital, its significance for the defence of the veneration of icons, its liturgical and hymnographical activity, its role in the spiritual direction of people, its influence on Byzantine politics, its richness and grandeur, and, of course, the great personalities of Theodore and other hegumens and elders: all these factors gave it the central position which the monastery occupied in Byzantine monasticism for several centuries.[7] The influence of the Stoudion was very strong not only in the area of Constantinople, but also quite far beyond its boundaries, for example, on Mount Athos. So we are entitled to speak of the Studite tradition as a whole complex of features which were characteristic of Byzantine monasticism in the period in which we are interested.

One of the most important features of this tradition was the educational activity of the Studite monks. This is important for us because Symeon the New Theologian and his spiritual father Symeon the Studite (the Pious) were directly involved in it: both as spiritual directors and writers, the first also as a copyist and organizer of a library.

The spectrum of educational activity in the Studite monastery and other communities belonging to its circle was very wide. N. Wilson considers that the parallel between them and learned Benedictine monasteries of the Middle Ages is pertinent.[8] The Studite monastery itself possessed a rich library.[9] The tradition of copying books in the monastery derives from Plato, the uncle and predecessor of Theodore. The latter, in his funeral oration on Plato, spoke of the large number of books copied by Plato himself.[10] In the time of **(p. 15)** Theodore there was already a scriptorium in the monastery, where a number of copyists produced books: the rules of Theodore provide penalties for copyists, in particular if they do not follow the original exactly or do not observe correct punctuation.[11] The art of calligraphy was developed in the Studite monastery,[12] and the origin of the minuscule script is connected with the monastery: as C. Mango indicates, 'it was introduced for the purpose of…cabinet study as opposed to reading out loud.'[13]

Encouraging copying and collecting books, Theodore did not forget to remind his monks of the necessity of reading them. One of the instructions of the Studite *Hypotyposis* contains the prescriptions concerning the borrowing of books from the library:

> It should be known that on days when we perform no physical labour the librarian bangs a gong once, the brothers gather at the place where books are kept, and each takes one, reading it until late. Before the bell is rung for evening service the librarian bangs again, and all come to return their books according to the list.[14]

One might deduce from this rule that reading books was regarded as a kind of reward and was supposed to be done during leisure time, whereas on ordinary days manual work predominated (and so the parallel with the learned Benedictines does not in this respect fit very well).[15] However, another interpretation of the rule is possible: perhaps the reading of books was permitted every day, at times when there was no manual labour, but compulsory only during leisure time; so the rule was given just to prevent monks from wasting time on feast days. Be that as it may, the rule indicates that monks could borrow at least one book each at the same time: if there were seven hundred or a

thousand monks in the monastery,[16] how many books must there have been in the library?

Generally speaking, when giving instructions concerning the **(p. 16)** library and books, Theodore followed the tradition of early monasticism. According to the Pachomian rules, there should have been no one in the monastery who had not learned to read and who did not know by heart something of Scripture, at least (!) the New Testament and the Psalter.[17] We have no evidence that learning Scripture by heart was compulsory in Studite monasticism, but, as we have seen, reading books was encouraged and even required. We think that there is a difference between the aim of reading in early monasticism and in the Studite tradition: early monks read books in a contemplative manner just to gain profit for their own souls, whereas the Studites were supposed to be able to bring profit to others, particularly to seculars who asked for spiritual direction. Simplifying, one can say that the Studites were not expected to be uneducated. Even when a certain hagiographical source mentions an 'unlettered' monk, it does not usually mean that he was not able to read: the author only wishes to emphasize that his hero did not obtain his wisdom from books, but directly from God.

2. Spiritual Direction in the Studite Tradition

Another aspect of the Studite tradition which should be discussed in connection with our main subject is the enormous activity of the Studites in the spiritual direction of both monks and laymen. Inside the monastery the hegumen himself was usually the spiritual father of all the monks. The Studite *Hypotyposis* prescribes daily 'revelation of thoughts', that is, confession before the hegumen. In Great Lent it took place during matins and was organized as follows: at the beginning of the fourth ode of the canon the hegumen went from his usual place in the church and sat down in a remote corner of the church, where the monks came to him one after another.[18] The daily confession before the hegumen, it seems, was a necessary component of the monastic life; at least, it was prescribed by the rule.[19] The confession **(p. 17)** before someone else instead of the hegumen was allowed only in exceptional circumstances; one particular case was when the hegumen resigned but remained in the community: he could pass to his successor the administration of the monastery but keep for himself the spiritual direction.[20]

If the daily confession of monks existed in both early and later monasticism, the practice of the monastic direction of lay people is especially characteristic of the iconoclastic epoch, at least on a large scale. The beginning of the institution of the 'elders' whose main task was to confess lay people is connected with this practice. Of course, the elders who directed lay people existed before iconoclasm as well, but their social importance and influence had grown enormously during this particular period.

To understand the nature of this institution, which has existed in the Eastern Church up to the present time, one must take into consideration historical circumstances which caused its development in the iconoclastic period. As Bishop Kallistos Ware points out, within the life of the Church there are two forms of apostolic succession:

> First there is the visible succession of the hierarchy, the unbroken series of bishops in different cities…Alongside this, largely hidden, existing on a 'charismatic' rather than an official level, there is secondly the apostolic succession of the spiritual fathers and mothers in each generation of the Church.[21]

If these two types of succession usually coexist in peace and in most cases merge together, when the bishops and priests are spiritual directors of people, in the iconoclastic epoch there arose a polarization between them. The reason was the distinct fall in authority of the 'official' hierarchy in the eyes of the people because of the collaboration of its members with iconoclasts. When such a high number of representatives of the clergy became renegades, people turned to the monks, in whom they saw the defenders of Orthodoxy. Though Studite sources do not speak of the spiritual direction of laymen as a special monastic service and do not appear to have initiated a special post of the 'confessor of people', this service in fact existed since this time and many monks were involved in it.

It is known that in the epoch we are speaking of there were a number of monks who heard confessions without being priests. This is not something unique to the Studite tradition or the iconoclastic **(p. 18)** period. The founders of Egyptian and Palestinian monasticism, who were spiritual fathers of their monks, such as Pachomios and Anthony, were never ordained; Varsanouphios and John of Gaza were not priests.[22] But in early monasticism spiritual direction of non-ordained monks was mostly limited to monastic circles. What was new in the iconoclastic and post-iconoclastic periods, was that non-ordained monks became 'elders' of lay people. K. Holl provides many

examples from lives of saints and ascetical sources which confirm this statement.[23] The view of monks as possessing the right of confession is fixed in some authoritative sources, such as 'Sermon on Penitence' by Patriarch John the Ascetic, who does not hesitate to say:

> Our Lord Jesus Christ...sent prophets, Apostles, bishops, priests, deacons, and teachers for spiritual teaching, while monks for exhortation, [so that people may] confess before them with repentance.[24]

In the twelfth century John of Antioch refers to this custom as existing from the iconoclastic period:

> For four hundred years, since the time [of Constantine Copronymos] until now, the order of monks has been honoured and exalted by the faithful to such a degree that confession and avowal of sins, absolution and penances have been transferred to the monks.[25]

Modern scholars, in order to explain such a steady practice in Byzantine monasticism, distinguish between spiritual direction and revelation of thoughts on the one hand, and sacramental confession on the other. I. Hausherr argues very strongly that they are completely separated, and that the role of non-ordained spiritual fathers **(p. 19)** was 'more psychological than theological or canonical'.[26] 'One would have to prove that they gave sacramental absolution', the scholar claims.[27] However, such a distinction does not correspond to any distinction the monastic sources themselves make. Moreover, the Eastern practice of confession did not have 'sacramental absolution' in the Western sense, that is, with the reading of a special formula in which the privilege of the priest to 'bind and loose' is emphasized.[28]

There was, of course, strong opposition to this custom on the part of hierarchy and canonists,[29] and finally it almost disappeared in the Eastern Church, but in the time between Theodore the Studite and Symeon the New Theologian (ninth to eleventh centuries) it existed and was becoming more and more widespread. Having obtained a prominent place in spiritual direction of lay people, elders extended the service itself: they were not only a kind of adviser, as early spiritual directors may appear to be;[30] sometimes they would bring the entire life of their spiritual children under their control. The ideal of absolute obedience, peculiar to monasteries, was transferred to relations between the elder and the spiritual child. One may say that it was a revolution in the attitude to spiritual fatherhood in general, and in the practice of confession in particular.

3. Symeon the Studite: Personality

Symeon the New Theologian's spiritual father, Symeon the Studite, was one of the representatives of the institution of 'elders'. In the life of his great disciple he occupied an enormously important place. 'Symeon the New Theologian is probably unique in that the three principal external events of his life, his becoming a monk at the Stoudion, his transfer to another monastery and finally his exile were all due to his extraordinary devotion to his spiritual director, called Symeon the Pious,' H. Graef writes.[31] The greatest interior event **(p. 20)** which changed the whole of Symeon's life, his first mystical illumination by the divine light, is also due to Symeon the Studite. Through the latter Symeon the New Theologian was introduced to monastic life in general and to the Studite tradition in particular. During Symeon the elder's lifetime Symeon the younger greatly admired him and after his death immediately began to venerate him as a saint.

All these facts impel us to pay particular attention to Symeon the Studite's personality and teaching. Why was he able to exert such a great influence on his disciple? What was the nature of their relationship: was it just a personal friendship, or can Symeon the Studite also be considered as a direct predecessor of Symeon the New Theologian in some aspects of the latter's ascetical and mystical approach? To answer these questions, one has to analyse all the existing evidence on Symeon the Studite's personality.[32]

Unfortunately, we lack specific biographical details; some evidence concerning him in the writings of both Symeon the New Theologian and Nikitas Stithatos has survived, but, as we shall see, it is not clear enough to allow the exact reconstruction of his spiritual image.

To begin with, let us quote the passage from Symeon the New Theologian's sixteenth 'Catechetical Discourse', which is regarded as autobiographical;[33] this text provides valuable, though fragmentary, information on Symeon the Studite:

> I was the novice of a venerable father, who was equal to the great and exalted saints…It happened that one day we were going into the city in which he lived, to visit his spiritual children. We spent the whole day among them, for there were many whom he helped even by his presence alone. At evening we came back to our cell, hungry and thirsty from much labour and the heat, because, even though the day was hot, he was not accustomed to take the slightest nap, in spite of his age, though he was about sixty years old.[34]

Symeon entered the Stoudion when he was 27, and the Studite at that time was 60, so the latter was born some thirty-three years before Symeon, that is, according to I. Hausherr, in 917.[35] (Following P. Christou's chronology, one should presume in 924.)[36] We learn **(p. 21)** from the passage that the Studite, though not a priest, had many spiritual children and was regarded as an elder. The very fact that he was allowed to visit them, spending the whole day outside the monastery, shows that he was respected not only by his adherents but also by the monastery authorities.

Continuing his story, Symeon gives us a piece of information concerning the Studite's ascetical approach and methods of spiritual direction. Having returned to the cell after an exhausting day, the young Symeon did not want to eat, because he thought he would not be able to stand for prayer. But the elder told him to eat without any embarrassment:

> So we ate and drank even more than necessary, for he also ate condescending to my weakness. Then when the meal was finished he told me: 'Know this, child, that it is neither fasting, nor vigil, nor bodily effort, nor any other laudable action that pleases God, but only the humble, simple and good soul and heart'.[37]

The disciple marvelled at what he heard and, having bowed down, asked for the elder's prayers. Before he left, he was told by the elder merely to recite the *Trisagion* (*Τρισάγιον*)[38] and go to sleep. Then, when Symeon returned to his own place and started to recite the *Trisagion*, a mystical illumination took place, when he saw the divine light and his elder within it.[39]

We learn from this story that the Studite was not a rigorist in ascetical matters: he would allow himself and his disciple to eat even 'more than necessary' and recite only a short *Trisagion* before sleep instead of the usual quite long 'rule of prayers'. These two pieces of evidence correspond to the 'Ascetical Discourse' written by the Studite, where he recommends to the disciple to eat everything which **(p. 22)** is offered and to drink wine;[40] and refers to the *Trisagion* before sleep when saying: 'It is better to recite with attention merely one *Trisagion* and go to sleep, than to spend four hours in vigil with useless chatting.'[41] The ease with which the Studite sometimes allowed his disciple to relax ascetical discipline does not mean, of course, that he was not himself an ascetic and a man of prayer; it only means that he did not put 'bodily effort' in first place, but emphasized the need for humility and simplicity in order to achieve mystical experience.

Symeon speaks of the Studite's own deep mystical life, testifying that he had visions of divine light. In *Cat*. 16 Symeon mentions that he often heard from his spiritual father 'of divine illuminations sent from heaven to the ascetics, of floods of light, and conversations between God and man thereby'.[42] In *Eth*. 5 Symeon describes his talk with the Studite after the first vision of light as a dialogue between one who has just received his first mystical experience and one who has possessed it for a long time:

> If there exists someone who has explained this to him before, since he has already come to know God, he comes to that person and tells him: 'I have seen!'. [The elder] asks: 'What did you see, my child?'—'A light, my father, a sweet sweet light; and my mind does not know how to describe it to you…At once the space of my cell vanished and the world disappeared…I was left alone with this light…There was ineffable joy, which is still in me, and great love and desire, so that streams of tears flowed out of me, as you see now.' And he answers and tells him: 'It is He, my child.'[43]

Such a mysticism was what attracted the young Symeon to the Studite; one may suppose that this, together with the gift of healing which he possessed,[44] was what gained him many other spiritual children.[45]

I. Hausherr's suggestion that the appellation 'the Pious', *Εὐλαβής* (which he translates as 'Réservé') was given to the Studite in an ironical manner by his enemies, who allegedly 'accused him of a serious lack of modesty [réserve]',[46]

lacks any serious basis. There is no evidence that the term was ever used sarcastically. More likely, it was respectfully given to the Studite by his spiritual children by analogy with the biblical Symeon (Luke 2: 25). Besides, Symeon the New **(p. 23)** Theologian would probably not have used the term when speaking of his spiritual father, if it was really a sarcastic nickname.

The Studite seems not to have been highly educated: Symeon speaks of his spiritual father as 'one who has not received grammar lessons' (*μαθήσεως γραμμάτων ὑπάρχων ἀμύητος*)[47] and Nlkltas calls him 'unlettered' (*ἀγράμματος*).[48] However, such expressions are nothing but clichés characteristic of the lives of saints. As H. Turner remarks, the very fact that the Studite handed the book by Mark the Ascetic to Symeon shows that he had read it and that it was his own and not the monastery's property.[49] Moreover, the Studite was an author of at least one written work, which shows that he was able to express himself adequately in writing.

Several modern authors who have written on the Studite have analysed evidence in both Symeon and Nikitas which seems to indicate that the Studite was a kind of a 'holy fool', that is, using L. Rydén's definition, 'a person who serves God under the guise of foolishness'.[50] This type of sanctity, based on the literal interpretation of Paul's 'we are fools for Christ's sake' (1 Cor. 4: 10), and 'the foolishness of God is wiser than men' (1 Cor. 1:25), has been known in the Orthodox East since the fifth century,[51] and occurs in Byzantine and Russian spirituality over many centuries (if not up to the present), though quite rarely. Scholars are divided in their opinions concerning the question of whether Symeon the Studite was a holy fool. K. Holl expresses his surprise at the Studite's strange behaviour as described by Symeon.[52] Both I. Hausherr and B. Krivochéine take a moderate position on the question, while admitting that there is something ambiguous in the existing evidence on the Studite.[53] I. Rosenthal-Kamarinea is convinced that the Studite was a holy fool in the full sense of the term,[54] and L. Rydén calls him 'a part-time holy fool'.[55]

Let us, in turn, examine the evidence in order to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion. There is a passage in Nikitas which indicates the charges made against Symeon by Stephen of Nikomidia: the latter **(p. 24)** was convinced that the Studite was a 'sinner' (*ἁμαρτωλός*), whereas Symeon venerated him as a saint.[56] To explain the reason for Stephen's accusation, Nikitas writes:

> [Symeon the Studite], after mortifying his flesh through excessive dispassion and subduing the instincts of his earthly life into perfect silence to such a degree that the body of anyone who came near him did not evoke any more feeling from him than one corpse does from another, feigned passionateness (*ἐμπάθειαν*), first to conceal the treasure of his dispassion, then because he wanted through this bait to rescue certain souls from the abyss of perdition…The synkellos seized upon this admirable fishing method and used it as a specious pretext for his accusation.[57]

Evasive and equivocal expressions by Nikitas do not allow us to understand in what concrete actions the Studite's 'passionateness' was displayed. We must not forget that Nikitas did not know the Studite personally and everything he tells us about him, he could take only from Symeon's writings or conversations. As for Symeon, for him the Studite was dispassion personified.[58] When describing the Studite's dispassion, Symeon indicates that there were some aspects of the Studite's behaviour which 'by the standards of contemporary monasticism would have appeared bizarre'.[59] The following passage from 'Hymn 15' is quite eloquent:

> Symeon the Saint, the Pious, the Studite,
> Did not blush before the members of anyone,
> Neither to see others naked, nor to be seen naked…
> He remained motionless, unhurt and impassive.[60]

Wondering in what circumstances the Studite could see naked people and could appear naked, scholars found 'parallels' in the 'Lives' of Symeon of Emesa and Andrew, both holy fools. The first on one occasion stripped naked and came to the women's section of the public baths; naturally, he was expelled by the furious women. Having been asked afterwards how he felt when entering the women's bath, Symeon answered: 'Believe me, child, I was then like a piece of wood among other pieces of wood. For I did not feel that I had a body and that I was among bodies.'[61] The second, Andrew, **(p. 25)** also used to walk naked[62] and also felt as if he were 'dead or a piece of wood without feelings' while in the company of some prostitutes.[63]

The question is, how far these episodes correspond to what we know about Symeon the Studite? Apart from the similarity in using some standard comparisons, such as that of the body with a piece of wood, there is nothing else which would directly correspond; there is no trace of evidence that the Studite walked naked in the street or went to a women's bath. Moreover, neither Symeon nor Nikitas call him *σαλός* (fool). Comparing the Studite's life with that of famous holy fools, we see significant differences: he was a monk of a monastery, while they often lived in cities among lay people; he was respected in the monastery and city as an elder, while they were despised by both monks and laymen.

There is, one suspects, a quite trivial explanation for the passage from Symeon's 'Hymn 15': the Studite simply went to the bath, either in the monastery or in the city, and indeed not the women's but the men's bath. At least, it is the only normal situation when a monk can see naked people and himself be seen naked. Most probably, he would go to the bath in his own monastery. As C. Mango states, in Byzantium 'members of clergy attended the baths as regularly as any other segment of urban society'.[64] The majority of monks also must have attended the baths, but not as often as lay people and secular clergy: 'monastic typika of the eleventh and twelfth centuries', the scholars argue, 'varied between washing twice a month to three times a year, but the most usual frequency was once a month.'[65] We know from Theodore the Studite himself that, even in his time, in the Stoudion there was 'a bathhouse with baths and other facilities'.[66] Symeon the New Theologian mentions baths (*λοντρά*) among the immovable property of the monasteries of his time.[67]

At the same time there was always some opposition to attending **(p. 26)** the baths in monastic circles.[68] We may remember two stories from the 'Spiritual Meadow': in one of them monks asked the hegumen to build the bath in the monastery near the spring, and, though he was against it, he agreed, 'condescending to the weakness of the brothers'. As soon as the building was finished, the water in the spring dried up, and it came again only after the hegumen ordered the bath to be destroyed.[69] In another story the old monk Alexander complained that 'our fathers never washed their faces, and we open public baths [*τά λουρτά τὰ δημόσια ἀνοίγομεν*]'[70] Therefore, attending the baths was considered a weakness, whereas not attending was regarded as an ascetical virtue.[71] For the rigorist party of monks the very fact that the Studite went to the bath could be enough to declare that he was as weak as the others, and so not a saint at all. As is discussed below, the Studite was not a rigorist in ascetical matters, whereas the 'standard saint' of Byzantine ascetical and hagiographic literature would not usually eat or sleep or wash himself: everything like that was regarded as 'condescension to the body' and therefore incompatible with the ideal of sanctity.

One therefore arrives at the conclusion that there is nothing directly testifying that the Studite was a holy fool, even 'part-time', or that he 'cultivated nudism'.[72] Neither is there anything specific to confirm H. Graef's supposition that 'there had been at least some incident in his life which was not in keeping with sanctity, and which both his disciple and Nikitas did their best to cover up, while not being able to leave it out altogether.'[73]

One may suggest, however, that even if Symeon the Studite was not a holy fool himself, he might have at least imitated holy fools in certain respects. Nikitas, when speaking of some strange traits of the Studite's behaviour, explains them by his humble desire to conceal **(p. 27)** his dispassion.[74] The idea that 'the dispassionate should conceal his dispassion by pretending to be subject to some passion,' derives from John Klimakos.[75] The latter also cites some cases from the lives of holy fools as examples of their humility and dispassion.[76] Developing the idea of Klimakos, Symeon in *Cat*. 8 says that the one who 'pretending to be evil seems to utter wicked words…to turn those who do evil to repentance and salvation' is an imitator of Christ and a saviour of people.[77] Very possibly, the Studite is implied here. However, any direct parallel between the Studite and holy fools is still lacking.

Nikitas tells us that the Studite spent forty-five years in monastic life and possessed gifts of healing and miraculous powers.[78] The exact year of his death is not known: I. Hausherr puts it at approximately 986 or 987.[79] The only information with which Nikitas provides us is that between the death of the Studite and Symeon's conflict with Stephen sixteen years passed.[80] It is, therefore, clear that the Studite had died by the end of the tenth century.

4. The Life of Symeon the New Theologian

Let us now turn to our main subject and examine the existing evidence concerning the life of Symeon the Studite's great disciple, Symeon the New Theologian.

The basic source of biographical information on Symeon the New Theologian is his 'Life', written by his disciple Nikitas Stithatos thirty years after Symeon's death.[81] Nikitas observes the basic rules of the classical Byzantine life of a saint, developing standard themes: his hero is born into a noble family; from early childhood he is virtuous and serious, avoiding childish play; he goes to school but rejects 'pagan wisdom'; he refuses his family inheritance when entering the monastery; he struggles against demonic temptations and always gains victory; he performs miracles and healings. Such **(p. 28)** themes we find already in the 'Life of Anthony' (fourth century), which became a prototype of all subsequent lives of saints.[82]

Another, still more important, source of Symeon's biography are his own writings: unlike the works of most of the church Fathers of both preceding and subsequent periods, all his works are of a distinctly autobiographical character. There is a difference between the portrait of Symeon drawn by Nikitas and the picture we can obtain from Symeon's own writings. Nikitas' work is an icon of Symeon's life rather than his biography: it is stylized and conventional.[83] When reading Symeon himself, one is always astonished by the complete absence of any posing or stylization, which is so characteristic of many Byzantine writers of his epoch, and by Symeon's openness, unusual for the Eastern tradition: he sets forth his inner mystical journey with clarity and plenitude. However, Symeon says very little about the external events of his life: in this respect we mostly have to rely on the information provided by Nikitas.[84]

According to I. Hausherr's generally accepted chronology, Symeon was born in ad 949 and died in 1022.[85] Before Hausherr, K. Holl claimed that Symeon was born in between 963 and 969 and died in 1041 or 1042.[86] Questioning both chronologies, the Greek patrolo-gist P. Christou advanced yet another one, insisting that the date of Symeon's birth is 956 and that of his death is 1036.[87] In the following **(p. 29)** account of Symeon's life Hausherr's dates with Christou's dates in brackets will normally be given.

The place of Symeon's birth was the village of Galati in Paphlagonia. Symeon's parents Basil and Theophano were rich and influential, although provincial, aristocrats. From the age of eleven Symeon lived in Constantinople with his uncle who occupied an important position at the imperial court. Symeon studied at a 'grammar' (secondary) school and demonstrated outstanding ability, but did not continue his studies at a 'philosophical' (higher) school.[88]

According to Nikitas, the young Symeon refused the honour of being introduced to the imperial brothers Basil and Constantine Porphyrogenitoi, preferring to remain on the sidelines.[89] What was the reason for this and what eventually led Symeon to the position of a *σπαθαροκουβικουλάριος* (chamberlain of the bodyguard) and a **(p. 30)** member of the *σύγκλητος* (state senate) which he was to assume,[90] we do not know. Nikitas only mentions an 'extraordinary' death of Symeon's uncle which made Symeon think of withdrawal from the world.[91] The actual withdrawal, however, did not take place until several years later.

For all his outward prosperity, Symeon, as he makes it clear in one of his hymns, very early experienced great inner suffering on account of the absence of people close to him and his inability to be satisfied with earthly wealth:

> My parents did not harbour natural love for me,
> My brothers and all my friends laughed at me...
> Relatives, acquaintances from outside and powerful people in the world
> Turned away from me and could not bear to see me,
> And even more strove to ruin me through their dishonour.
> Often I desired glory without sin,
> But did not find it in this present life...
> How many times I wanted people to love me,
> Desired to have closeness and openness with them,
> But nobody among upright people could bear me;
> Others more wanted to see me and to be more closely acquainted with me
> But I ran away from them...
> Good people avoided me on account of my external appearance,
> While evil people I myself avoided from my own volition.[92]

(p. 31) This early dissatisfaction with life compelled Symeon to read spiritual literature and to seek out a man who could be his guide. This desire of Symeon's also did not meet with the approval of those around him, who all

concurred in asserting that 'there is now no such saint on earth'.[93] However, Symeon continued his search for a spiritual father and eventually this search was crowned with success. Let us note in passing that the polemic with those who said that in his time it was impossible to attain sanctity (such people Symeon labelled 'new heretics')[94] became one of the basic themes of his later works.

The meeting with Symeon the Studite, who became the spiritual father of the young Symeon, turned out to be decisive in his life: in this person Symeon the younger found the one whom he had long been seeking. The young Symeon so loved his teacher that he venerated him as a saint, regarding himself as unworthy to touch his garment or to kiss the place in which he stood during prayer.[95]

Once the elder gave him a book by Mark the Monk (fifth century?) to read, where he was particularly struck by three sayings, in which he found the recommendations to follow the voice of his conscience,[96] to fulfil God's commandments in order to attain the 'energies of the Holy Spirit',[97] and to seek the inner spiritual *gnosis* which comes through prayer.[98] The young Symeon took Mark's words as a call to action. In all things he began to obey the voice of his conscience, began to try to fulfil all Christ's commandments and pray diligently, each day adding to his evening prayer rule. His prayers became long, concentrated, and intense, and were often accompanied by tears. It was at this time, as Symeon stood praying one night, that he was visited by his first mystical illumination, which he describes in his twenty-second 'Catechetical Discourse', speaking of a certain George but implying himself:[99]

> One day, as he was standing and reciting 'God, have mercy upon me, a sinner', uttering it with his mind rather than his mouth, suddenly an abundance of divine radiance appeared from above and filled all the place. As this happened, the youth lost all awareness and forgot that he was in a house and under the roof. He saw only light all around him...He was wholly united **(p. 32)** to the immaterial light and thought that he himself became light; having forgotten all the world, he became filled with tears and with ineffable joy and gladness.[100]

Then, Symeon continues, George's mind ascended into heaven and saw an even brighter light in which his spiritual father appeared to him...When the vision passed, the youth came to himself and soon the cock crowed: the night had passed by unnoticed.[101]

Despite this clear divine visitation, Symeon remained in the world for quite a long time: the period between the first vision of the light and entering the monastery he considered to be the years of his spiritual fall.[102] He led a dissipated secular life, but did not break off contact with his spiritual father, to whom he was indebted for his final exodus from the world.

What was the main reason for Symeon's withdrawal from the imperial court and his entry, at the age of 27,[103] into the Studite monastery? An attempt to answer this question has been made by J. McGuckin, who connects the events of Symeon's youth with those that took place at the Byzantine imperial court of 960–90. McGuckin, in particular, advances the hypothesis that in 976, when the Paracoemomenus Basil seized power on behalf of Basil II Porphyrogenitis, 'Symeon knew that his political career was over, and even perhaps that his life was in danger'; therefore, he sought 'political refuge' in the Stoudion.[104]

Turning from the realm of hypotheses to the area of literary evidence, let us see what Symeon himself says of his exodus. He describes it in bright colours, regarding his elder as one who, like Moses, has taken him out of Egyptian captivity:

> He said: 'Come here, my child, I will lead you to God.'
> And I said to him from my great unbelief:
> 'And what sign will you show me to assure me...?'
> **(p. 33)** 'Light a large fire', he said, 'so that I may penetrate to the centre,
> And if I do not remain unburned, do not follow me.'
> This word struck me, and I did what he had commanded.
>
> And the flame blazed up, and he stood in the middle,
> Intact, uninjured, and he called me to him.
>
> 'I am afraid, master', I said, 'for I am a sinner!'

He stepped out, came to me and embraced me:
'Why were you afraid, tell me, why do you fear and tremble?
This marvel is great and awesome, but you will see greater ones yet!'
Struck [*ἔξεστην*], I told him: 'Master, I do not dare to approach you...
For I see that you are a man who transcends human being,
I do not dare even look at you, whom the fire venerated!'
He made me come close, he clasped me in his arms
And kissed me again with a holy kiss
And he himself entirely gave out a fragrance of immortality.'[105]

What is this: allegory or an account of a real event? We can indeed encounter a number of similar stories in the lives of saints.[106] Whatever it may be, Symeon the younger immediately followed his master:

'Come, let us take to our heels,' Moses said...
'Let's go, master,' I said, T will never separate from you...'[107]

Symeon began his monastic life with great zeal; yet it was not his lot to remain in this monastery long: the hegumen and brotherhood were disturbed by his excessive love for the elder Symeon the Pious. Symeon the younger's attitude to Symeon the elder was based upon complete obedience: he was a servant of his teacher and would not **(p. 34)** dare to take a step backwards without the latter's direction.[108] The hegumen suggested several times that the young novice renounce the elder's guidance, but he did not consent, resulting in his expulsion from the monastery.

Nothing specific is known concerning the reason of Symeon's exile from the Studite monastery. Nikitas insists that the jealousy of monks was the only reason,[109] but there may have been something in the spirituality of Symeon the Studite which caused discontent in the hegumen. Besides, the hegumen himself, according to the Studite tradition, was usually (though not necessarily) the spiritual director of the monks. As was indicated above, the role of hegumen in the Studite tradition was very important indeed. It might be added here that the situation which arose involving the two Symeons was not uncommon in the history of spiritual direction in the East. The activity of elders often evoked hostility from the hegumens and other representatives of the hierarchy. It was connected with the fact that the elders usually lived in monastic communities but had their own spiritual children, and relations between them were closer than relations between other monks. Therefore sometimes elders created a 'community inside the community', and it did indeed cause the jealousy of others.[110]

Symeon then joined the monastery of St. Mamas the Martyr in Constantinople,[111] where he was tonsured as a monk. Nikitas describes as follows Symeon's daily schedule in St. Mamas:

> He practised only prayer and stillness, devoted himself to the study of divine Scripture and in a most perfect way became united to God in the contemplation of light...Every day he purified himself with the life-giving bread and precious blood of Christ, and ate only vegetables and seeds...He did not take anything else on any day except Sundays. On feast days he took part in the common meal with the brotherhood, [sitting] with his head hung down and in a state of constant contrition. Then he stood up with thanksgiving and escaped to his cell, locked the door and remained in prayer. Then, having spent some time reading, he would rest a little, bowed to the earth, for he had no bed or blanket or anything else necessary for the body...After **(p. 35)** the reading he would do manual work, copying the text of divine Scriptures: he was a brilliant copyist, and everyone who saw his handwriting became filled with joy. When the bell rang [*τον ξύλον δέ κρούοντος*],[112] he would immediately rise to divine psalmody, and while the divine Oblation [*ἀναφορά*] was being accomplished...he would pray with tears and converse with God until the priest elevated the bread. After this, filled with the divine fire, he would receive the most pure Mysteries and immediately without a word return to his cell.[113]

We should note that daily Communion, accompanied by tears, was a characteristic feature of Symeon's spirituality. In this he was faithful to the ancient monastic practice,[114] as well as to the advice of his spiritual father Symeon the Pious, who used to say: 'Brother, never take Communion without tears.'[115] Later, as hegumen, Symeon the younger strove to revive the tradition of daily Communion, as well as insisting upon the need for tears during Communion. However, the majority of monks were unable to imitate him in this: as he writes in *Cat*. 4, when he once quoted the

words of Symeon the Studite on Communion with tears to some laymen and monks, his listeners greeted these words with naked hostility and irony.[116] As regards Symeon himself, he maintained his custom of daily Communion throughout the rest of his life.

During the first years after he became a monk, Symeon saw the divine light many times: he mentions one such vision in the same discourse which tells of the youth George, yet remarks that this second vision was weaker than the first: it was merely 'a dim ray of the most sweet and divine light'.[117] Another vision is described in *Cat*. 16: it was again bright and caused within the ascetic a state of profound ecstasy.[118]

After living two years in the monastery of St. Mamas, Symeon was entrusted with instructing the brethren in church. In 980 (988), when the hegumen of the monastery died, the monks elected Symeon in his place. At about the age of 31 he was ordained priest and elevated to **(p. 36)** the rank of hegumen by the Patriarch of Constantinople, Nicholas II Chrysovergis.[119] During his ordination he again had a vision of the light: his biographer writes that when the bishop read over him the prayer of consecration,

> he saw the Holy Spirit, Which descended without form as simple and boundless light and covered his sacred head; he always saw this light when he celebrated the Liturgy throughout the forty–eight years of his priesthood.[120]

When Symeon became hegumen, the monastery of St. Mamas was in decline and Symeon took upon himself the task of its revival. He successfully managed the monastery's building projects and attended to its economic needs. Nikitas tells us that Symeon restored the monastery church, covered the ground with marble and purchased new church plate, including vestments, icons and lamps 'made from limpid stone'. He also organized the library and sacristy.[121] Symeon's former aristocratic connections might have helped him to find financial support for his activity as a rebuilder of the monastery.[122]

However, his main task was to raise the spiritual level of the brethren, who for many years had been left without guidance. He appealed to the monks with ardent exhortations to combat the passions and to fulfil Christ's commandments. From his writings of this period, such as *Cat*. I, delivered in all likelihood soon after he became hegumen, it is clear that he viewed the monastery as a single family of which he had been appointed spiritual father by the will of God.

> It is surprising to see, [B. Krivochéine writes], how Symeon in his very first appeal to his monks' endeavours to establish personal spiritual ties between himself and them. It was not easy to embody in practice the high ideals of the new hegumen in a monastery where the spiritual life was at a rather low level. Knowing this, Symeon repeatedly tries to enlist the support of the brethren in the common work of reviving the monastery. He does not cease exhorting them to begin a new life.[123]

(p. 37) Symeon's ardent sermons did not go unheeded: soon the monastery was full of new monks, among whom there were many of Symeon's devoted disciples. The young hegumen acquired popularity among the citizens of Constantinople; many civil servants and well-to-do patricians became his followers. The main theme of the majority of his sermons was the appeal to mystical union with Christ, which, he believed, is possible for all those who desire it.[124]

Symeon's discourses and exhortations were rooted in his own experience. The major theme of all of them was the divine light, which he himself contemplated with ever-increasing frequency. However, for a long time he was not aware that it was Christ who had appeared to him in the form of light until Christ Himself began to speak to him. In *Euch*. 2 Symeon relates in detail how he once heard the voice of Christ, Who said to him:

> 'I am God, Who has become man for your sake, and as you have sought Me out with all your soul, from now on you are My brother, My co-heir and My friend'.[125]

From Symeon's other writings it is clear that after this special personal encounter with Christ, the mystical feeling of closeness with Christ remained constant for him.

Symeon did not regard his mystical visions as something extraordinary, but was convinced that everyone who seeks

out God with all their heart would be worthy of seeing Him as light. This is why, in his sermons directed to the community, he spoke openly about his personal experience, thinking that this would encourage other brothers to follow his example and would finally bring them to the same sort of experience, which was for him the very core of a true Christian life.

However, by no means all of Symeon's audience were capable of accepting his teaching and of following him: to many people his spiritual ideal seemed excessively high. Some monks, attracted by his zeal, later turned out to be insufficiently brave and left the monastery. On the other hand, among those who remained in the monastery opposition gradually grew: a lack of understanding arose between the hegumen and the brothers. Symeon was accused of speaking too often of his personal experience: this could appear to be a breach of monastic ethics, according to which a monk should not speak of himself. Symeon's demanding insistence upon striving for **(p. 38)** spiritual gifts irritated those who did not have them, something attested by the aforementioned episode when Symeon spoke of Communion with tears while the monks greeted it with sarcasm. Finally, certain opinions of Symeon could not go unnoticed—on the uselessness of Baptism for those who do not have awareness of the grace of the Holy Spirit that they received; on the ineffectualness of Communion for those who do not see Christ with the eyes of the soul; on the impossibility of salvation for those who admit within themselves even the slightest passion; and so on. Such ideas, expressed in a sharp polemical tone, could serve as a pretext for accusing Symeon of unorthodox thinking.

The atmosphere in the monastery became more and more uneasy. During the patriarchate of Sisinnios I (995–8) some of the monks spoke out openly against the hegumen: when he was preaching during matins, they attacked him, shouting loudly, and wanted to drive him out of the monastery, but Symeon, as Nikitas claims, stood his ground with his hands lowered and looking at those who hated him with a smile and 'bright countenance'. Beside themselves with anger, they ran out of the church, smashed the locks of the monastery gates and ran to the other end of the city to the patriarch.[126] The latter summoned Symeon, and, after questioning him, was convinced of his innocence. He wanted to expel the rebels, but Symeon implored him to allow them to return to the monastery.[127] After this he remained hegumen until, in 1005 (1013), he handed over his duties to his disciple Arsenios.[128]

After adopting a more secluded life, Symeon most likely thought that he would spend the rest of his days in stillness, but further trials awaited him. The former Metropolitan of Nikomidia Stephen[129] **(p. 39)** spoke out against him, accusing him of excessive veneration for his spiritual father, who by this time had long since died. Every year, on the memorial day of his elder, Symeon arranged in the monastery a solemn celebration which was attended by many of those who venerated the elder. An icon of Symeon the Pious was also painted and a service to him was composed.[130] Stephen reproached Symeon for glorifying his elder as a saint when he had not been officially canonized.[131] Nikitas describes this conflict as a clash of legalistic formalism with genuine spirituality: for Symeon his spiritual father's holiness was beyond question, and he had no need of official confirmation of this holiness.

Once Stephen met Symeon in the building of the patriarchate and asked him: 'How do you distinguish the Son from the Father, with an intellectual or an actual distinction?'[132] Stephen's question is indicative of one of the most important disputes of the age, although most likely it was put with the aim of demonstrating Symeon's lack **(p. 40)** of book learning and scholarship. One might deduce from Stephen's question that Symeon was somehow involved in a kind of triadological argument and that perhaps the disagreement between him and Stephen reflected a difference in their positions in this argument.[133] We do not have enough evidence to confirm this supposition and the theological background to the debate is still unclear. In later sections of this study we will have to return to this conflict, significant for the history of Eastern spirituality, in an attempt to clarify its nature.

Symeon did not reply immediately but promised to give a reply in written form, after which he returned to his cell and wrote an epistle in verse, known as 'Hymn 21'. Initially setting forth his teaching on the Trinity, he then attacks those who, like Stephen, dare to theologize without having mystical gifts: this is a theme very characteristic of Symeon and here it is developed with particular polemic sharpness. According to Symeon, the Holy Spirit is sent

> ...Not to lovers of glory,
> Not to rhetoricians, not to philosophers,
> Not to those who have studied Hellenistic writings...
> Not to those who speak eloquently and with refinement,

> Not to those who have achieved great names...
> But to the poor in spirit and life,
> To the pure in heart and body,
> Who speak and even more live simply.[134]

Having indirectly denounced Stephen in this way, Symeon then moves into open attack:

> Stop, man, tremble, mortal by nature...
> How dare you, who are completely flesh
> And have not yet become spirit, like Paul,
> To philosophize and speak about the Spirit...?
> Yes, abandon your curiosity,
> Lay aside the blasphemy of your words...
> Like the serpent, possess prudence to be sure,
> But vomit the poison of wickedness...[135]

One can imagine what indignation this epistle caused in the ambitious metropolitan. He complained to the patriarch and the bishops about Symeon: under pressure from him the Synod was formally **(p. 41)** summoned at the beginning of 1009 (1020) and it expelled Symeon from the monastery.[136] At the same time Stephen organized an attack on the icons of Symeon the Pious, which were destroyed on his orders.[137]

Symeon, expelled from Constantinople, settled by the church of St. Marina near Chrysopolis, where he founded a small monastery.[138] Soon his friends in the capital achieved his complete vindication by the Patriarch Sergios II and Synod and it was suggested to him that he should return to his former monastery or even occupy a bishop's throne.[139] However, he turned down these proposals and spent the remainder of his years in the monastery of St. Marina surrounded by his disciples.

Despite these stormy events and the convulsions of the soul that accompanied them, Symeon's inner mystical life never weakened. According to Nikitas, he was granted many extraordinary gifts, including spiritual insight, prophecy, and miracle working. The biographer tells us that once Symeon healed an abbess from a serious illness, appearing to her in a vision together with his elder Symeon the Pious. Another time he healed a young man who could not eat any food: he blessed a piece of bread and gave it to the youth, after which the latter immediately became healthy. He also restored to health a paralysed boy who had lain in infirmity for four years by anointing him with oil from a lamp burning before the icon of St. Marina. There was one incident when his friend was restored to health as Symeon approached him; he had suffered from a stroke and his face had become so affected that he could not open his mouth. In describing these incidents, Symeon's biographer each time stresses the great compassion which Symeon showed to the sick, and his tears when he saw someone struck down by disease.[140]

Shortly before his death Symeon himself fell ill. His body was emaciated in the extreme and he could no longer move, but spent the days lying in bed. He could no longer, of course, celebrate the **(p. 42)** Liturgy every day as he had done all his life, but he received Communion every day as before. The time of his death had been made known to him beforehand. He also predicted to his disciples that thirty years after his death his relics would be solemnly translated to Constantinople: this later came true. Symeon died on 12 March 1022 (1037–8), surrounded by his disciples who with tears in their eyes and lighted tapers sang over him the funeral service.[141]

The account of Symeon the New Theologian's life in this chapter was deliberately limited to the material available from his own writings or from the 'Life' compiled by Nikitas. No attempt was made to place Symeon within the context of Byzantine secular history of his time both because his chronology is uncertain and because this falls beyond the scope of the present study. Much more important for this research has been to show that Symeon was an integral part of the great monastic history with its long tradition of asceticism, learning, worship, and spiritual direction. Discussing Symeon's scriptural and liturgical background, his literary dependence on Symeon the Studite, his cycle of daily reading, his main theological, ascetical, and mystical ideas, we shall many times return to the themes outlined in the present chapter.

Notes:

(4) *ODByz* 3, 1960. The name of the monastery *ἡ μονὴ τῶν Στουδίου* can literally be translated as 'the monastery of those [belonging] to Stoudios'; we use the shortened form 'the Stoudion'.

(5) Cf. Beck, *Jahrtausend*, 210–11.

(6) Ibid., 255–8.

(7) In fact, from the 9th to the 14th century, with a break in the 13th century, when Constantinople was occupied by the crusaders: see *ODByz* 3, 1960–1.

(8) Wilson, 'Libraries', 62.

(9) See Eleopoulos, *Βιβλιοθήκη*. On monastic libraries in Byzantium in general see Volk, *Klosterbibliotheken*.

(10) *Laud. Plato 16* [820 A].

(11) See *Pen*. 53–60 [1740 C].

(12) Leroy, 'Vie', 41.

(13) Mango, *Image*, p. vii, 45.

(14) *Hyp*. 16 [*PG* 9%1713 AB]; cf. Wilson, 'Libraries', 63.

(15) J. Leroy sharply criticizes the view which presents the Studite monastery as a centre of intellectual culture, or even a kind of conservatoire or academy. In the monastery there was a small school [cf. *L. Nich. Stud*. 869 C], where the pupils learned the alphabet, reading, Holy Scripture, and sometimes calligraphy; however, this school never became a university: 'Vie', 40–3.

(16) *L. Theod. Stud*. 31 [148 C] indicates that there were about one thousand monks, whereas Theophanis the Chronographer [Chron. 481] gives the number of seven hundred.

(17) Hausherr, *Penthos*, 139–40.

(18) *Hyp*. 22 [PG 99. 1712 B]; cf. Leroy, 'Vie', 33. It is not clear whether this prescription of the *Hypotyposis* relates to Great Lent only (it is placed under the rubric on Lent) or to the whole year. In general, Theodore the Studite attached much value to the hegumen as the head of a monastic community: in *Gr. Cat*. I. 45, which was delivered during his uncle Plato's life, he emphasizes that neither the latter, in spite of his age and previous leading position, nor another presbyter or the economos, should be regarded as equal to the hegumen.

(19) Cf. Janin, 'Monachisme', 24–5.

(20) Hausherr, *Direction*, 110.

(21) Ware, 'Father', 299.

(22) Ibid., 308.

(23) See Holl, *Enthusiasmus*, 316–26. R. Barringer has shown that some pieces of early hagiography are misinterpreted by Holl and that there is no clear evidence concerning non-ordained monks who heard confessions of lay people in hagiographical sources before the end of the 7th century: see *Penance*, 122. However, in the period between the late 7th and mid-9th centuries the centre of gravity of ecclesiastical penance, as far as the confession of laymen is concerned, shirts very markedly away from the episcopal towards the monastic sphere of influence: ibid., 154. As to the period between 886 and 983, some pieces of hagiography (e.g. 'Lives of Andrew the Fool', 'Paul the Younger', 'Luke the Younger') directly refer to non-ordained monks acting as 'spiritual fathers' and giving absolution (*συγχώρησις*,'forgiveness'): ibid. 177 and 192.

(24) *Penit*. [1920A].

(25) *Mon. Disc.* [1128 BC]. This text may be confirmed by another 12th-century piece of evidence: among the miniatures of the manuscript *Vatic, gr.* 1927 there is one, on fol. 5 iv., which presents the sacrament of confession performed by a monk, not a priest; see Martin, *Illustration*, 159.

(26) Hausherr, *Direction*, 100–2.

(27) Ibid., 100. Cf. a similar distinction between the monastic 'forgiveness of sins' and the episcopal power of 'binding and loosing' in Barringer, *Penance*, 163.

(28) Such a formula crept into some Greek and Slavic *euchologia* only as a result of Western influence after the 17th century: cf. Meyendorff, *Byz. Theol.*, 196.

(29) See Holl, *Enthusiasmus*, 326–31.

(30) For spiritual direction in the pre-monastic age (the 1st to 3rd centuries) see Campenhausen, *Authority*.

(31) Graef, 'Director', 608.

(32) In Chapter 4 we shall more specifically discuss Symeon the Studite's literary influence on Symeon the New Theologian.

(33) See Krivochéine, *SC* 104. 236–9 (n. 2).

(34) *Cat.* 16. 8–39.

(35) Hausherr, *Mystique*, p. xc.

(36) On different chronologies of Symeon the New Theologian see n. 87 below.

(37) *Cat.* 16. 51–7.

(38) In Byzantine practice the term *Τριοάγιον* (thrice holy) signifies not only the hymn 'Holy God, Holy and Strong, Holy and Immortal, have mercy upon us', but also a short doxology, short prayer to the Holy Trinity, and 'Our Father', which follow the *Trisagion* at the beginning of each office. Cf. the usage of the term *Τριοάγιον* in the Studite *Hypotyposis* 2: '*Τριοάγιον* and "Lord, have mercy" 12 times' [*PG 99.* 1705 B]. The same usage in the *Typikon of Evergetis* 633–4: 'Sing *Τριοάγιον* and *troparia* "Have mercy on us, O God"'; Gautier, 'Typicon' 226–7 [27]; cf. also 100; 103; 226; and 975.

(39) *Cat.* 16. 57–77. The description of the illumination is very similar to that of *Cat.* 22. However, in *Cat.* 22 the hero who experienced the illumination was still a layman 20 years old, while the vision in *Cat.* 16 took place when the hero was 27 and a novice in the monastery. Nikitas Stithatos indicates that these were two separate experiences (*Vie*, chs. 5 and 19).

(40) *Asc.* 25. Cf. also in Nikitas' 'Life of Symeon': 'The elder, wishing to cut off his [Symeon's] own will..., ordered him to eat and sleep'; Vie 12. 10–12.

(41) Asc. 9.

(42) *Cat. 16.* 9–12.

(43) *Eth.* 5. 294–310.

(44) *Vie* 72. 12.

(45) Turner, *Fatherhood*, 62.

(46) Hausherr, *Mystique*, p. lxxix.

(47) *Cat*. 6. 195.

(48) *Vie* 72. 13.

(49) Turner, *Fatherhood*, 62.

(50) Rydén, 'The Holy Fool', 106.

(51) Palladios speaks (in the year 420) of the Egyptian nun Isidora, who pretended to be a fool: *Laus*. Hist. 34 [98–100].

(52) Holl, *Enthusiasmus*, 18.

(53) See Hausherr, *Mystique*, p. lxxix; Krivochéine, *Light*, 359.

(54) Rosenthal-Kamarinea, 'Studites', 515–19.

(55) Rydén, 'The Holy Fool', 111.

(56) *Vie Si*. 13 ff.

(57) Ibid. 2–13.

(58) See Krivochéine, *Light*, 358–60.

(59) Turner, *Fatherhood*, 63.

(60) *Hymn* 15. 206–12. Cf. the discussion of the traditional fear of nakedness in monasticism in Chapter 10 (Section on dispassion).

(61) *L. Sym. Ernes*., 82–3 [148–9].

(62) *L. Andrew* [696 BC].

(63) Ibid. [652C–653A].

(64) Mango, *Image*, p. iv, 338–9.

(65) Kazhdan and Constable, *People*, 69. On the various monastic rules concerning bathing see Berger, *Bad*, 60 ff.

(66) See *Gr. Cat*. I. 36. There is no complete edition of Books 1 and 3 of the *Great Catechesis*; there are only some parts of them published by J. Cozza-Luzi in *Nova Patrum Bibliotheca* 10 (Rome, 1905). We cite from the Russian translation of these books (for the full title see Bibliography under Theodore the Studite), which was prepared on the basis of the eleventh-century manuscript *Patm*. 111, and which contains the most complete text so far published.

(67) *Cat*. 5. 732–4.

(68) Cf. the recommendation to monks not to attend baths in Diadochos, *Chapt*. 52 [114].

(69) John Moschos, *Meadow* 80 [2937A–1940 A].

(70) Ibid. 168 [3036 A]. This last remark might reflect the practice of certain Byzantine monasteries to provide bathing facilities for lay people: on this practice see Magdalino, 'Bath', 173 ff.

(71) On *ἀλουσία* (uncleanliness) as a traditional monastic virtue see Hunger, 'Bad- wesen'. As early as in the 4th century, Athanasios testifies about Anthony the Great that he 'did not wash his body with water': *L. Anth*. 47. 2 [262]. Gregory Nazianzen praises his friend Basil the Great for *ἀλουσία*: see *Disc*. 43. 61 [258]. Gregory himself, however, partook of the 'consolation of the bath': *Ep*. 126 [93]. Cf. Magdalino, 'Bath', 116.

(72) The expression of J. Gouillard, 'Procès', 11.

(73) Graef, 'Director', 609.

(74) *Vie* 81. 6–7.

(75) *Ladder* 26 [1064 BC].

(76) *Ladder* 25[997 BC].

(77) *Cat*. 8. 16–22.

(78) *Vie* 72. 10–12.

(79) Hausherr, *Mystique*, p. xc.

(80) Cf. *Vie* 73. 11–12.

(81) Hausherr, *Mystique*, 1–128 (=*Vie*). For the scholarly exposition of Symeon's life see Krivochéine, *SC* 96, 15–54; idem., *Light*, 15–63; Turner, *Fatherhood*, 16–36; Moda, 'Christ', 105–20; McGuckin, 'Symeon' (the latter is largely devoted to repudiation of Nikitas Stithatos).

(82) Its critical text has been published in *SC* 400. One may also compare the 'Life of Symeon' written by Nikitas with the 'Life of Theodore the Studite' attributed to the monk Michael: see *PG* 99. 113–232 (one version), and *PG* 99. 233–328 (another version).

(83) Cf. Krivochéine, *SC* 96. 16.

(84) The fact that Nikitas wrote with the intention to rehabilitate Symeon is not a sufficient basis for questioning the reliability of the 'Life' altogether, as some modern scholars do. Even though Nikitas sometimes contradicts himself when speaking of Symeon, his work is the only testimony of someone who knew Symeon personally (though in the latter's old age). It is clear that where Nikitas differs from Symeon, one should always prefer Symeon. But where modern scholars advance hypotheses which contradict Nikitas, we are often inclined to give preference to Nikitas.

(85) Hausherr, *Mystique*, pp. lxxxixff.

(86) *Enthusiasmus*, 23–6.

(87) *Νικήτα*, 9–11; '*Εἰσαγωγή*, 12–24. Hausherr's chronology has also been questioned by other scholars: see, e.g., Stathopoulos, *Gottesliebe*, 9 ft.; Kazhdan, 'Zamechaniya', 4–10. The main arguments against Hausherr's chronology are the following: 1. It contradicts the data of Nikitas' 'Life of Symeon': Nikitas indicates that Symeon was a priest for 48 years, whereas, according to Hausherr, he was a priest for only 42 years, from 980 to 1022. 2. Nikitas indicates that when Symeon the New Theologian established the cult of Symeon the Studite after the latter's death, it was Patriarch Sergios who gave his approval to this cult; after this Symeon celebrated the feast of his spiritual father for 16 years without obstruction until the conflict with Stephen of Nikomidia arose (Vie 72. 22–73.73.15). Sergios occupied the see of Constantinople in 1001–19. Even if he gave his approval to the cult of Symeon the Studite in 1001, the conflict and exile of Symeon the New Theologian must have taken place no earlier than 1016, whereas Hausherr dates the conflict to 1003–5 and the exile to 1009. 3. Hausherr's calculations are based on the presumption that Nicholas II Chrysovergis, who ordained Symeon, ascended the throne of Constantinople in 979, whereas some authoritative Byzantine sources place his enthronement in 984: see Grégoire and Orgels, 'Chronologic'; cf. Ostrogorsky, *History*, 585. If the latter date is correct and Symeon died in 1022, his priesthood would have lasted neither 48, nor 42 years. The chronology advanced by P. Christou corresponds more closely to the data of Nikitas' 'Life of Symeon', and so must not be ignored. See, however, objections by V. Grumel in 'Chrysobergès', 253 ff.

(88) *Vie* 2. 23–6. Note the difference between Symeon and Theodore the Studite, who, according to his 'Life', 'passed through all philosophy, with both ethics and dogmatics, and also dialectics and logic' [117 C–120 B]. The basic principles of the Byzantine educational system were inherited from the ancient Graeco-Roman tradition, and the

division of the Byzantine curriculum into two stages corresponded to a similar division in late antiquity where normal education consisted of the *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric, and dialectics) and the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, music, mathematics). Some Byzantine sources refer to three stages: so-called *προπαιδεία* preliminary education), *παιδεία* or *ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία* ('common education') and *τελεώτερα μαθήματα* ('more perfect skills', higher education). The basic models for the mastery of grammar were still the works of Homer, Sophocles, Euripides, and other ancient Greek writers, so in fact Byzantine schoolboys studied a language which nobody had spoken for many generations: see Lemerle, *Humanisme*, 99–103, 302–3; Buckler, 'Education', 200–20; Mango, *Byzantium*, 125 ff.; Wilson, *Scholars*, 18 ff.; *Kultura Vyzantii*, 366–400. Nikitas actually says that Symeon fully mastered basic grammar and then studied *tachygraphy* and acquired beautiful handwriting, but he refused to receive 'external education' with rhetorical skills. We should notice, however, that even secondary education in Byzantium was not on the whole available to everybody: as Lemerle indicates, nine-tenths of the population were unlettered: *Éléves*, 3 (cf. however, a more positive estimation of the level of literacy in Byzantium which is given by Browning, *Literacy*, p. vii, 46–52). The majority of those who received education belonged either to the aristocracy or to the clergy.

(89) *Vie* 3. 1–9.

(90) *Vie* 3. 9–11. The rank of spatharocubicularius was in earlier centuries restricted to eunuchs: see Bury, *System*, 122; Yannopoulos, *Société*, 36; Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 301–2. In Symeon's time, however, it no longer required a eunuch status; see McGuckin, 'Symeon', 19. Some scholars suggest that Symeon could have been castrated in childhood: see Turner, *Fatherhood*, 19; Morris, 'Saint', 44. This supposition, however, lacks sufficient grounds, since neither in the 'Life' nor in Symeon's own writings is there a clear indication that he was a eunuch. Nikitas, who mentioned that Symeon's disciple Arsenios was a eunuch (Vie 45. 4–5: *τῷ σώματι εὐνουχος*), would have said the same about Symeon if he also were one: for the Byzantine mentality there was nothing negative about this (the comparison with a eunuch in *Vie* 147. 6 refers to Symeon's posthumous 'angelic' state). Indirect proofs that Symeon was not a eunuch, for example, his allusion to nocturnal pollution in *Euch*. 1. 141–6, should also be taken into account.

(91) *Vie* 3. 16.

(92) *Hymn* 20. 98–119. With regard to the young Symeon's 'external appearance', it was probably quite pleasant. Nikitas says that Symeon 'differed from the others by his good looks and handsome appearance' (*Vie* 3. 1–2). Symeon in *Cat*. 22, which is regarded as autobiographical, speaks about the young George, of whom Symeon himself was a prototype, that 'he was handsome in appearance, elegant in body, manners, and gait, so much so that some for that reason had evil suspicions about him—that is, such people as looked only at the outward covering' (*Cat*. 22. 24–7). Perhaps, some 'good' people avoided Symeon because, with his aristocratic manners and rich relatives close to the emperor, he looked like a young careerist, while 'evil' people were interested in him only because of his closeness to the higher circles.

(93) *Euch*. I. 78–80.

(94) Cf. *Hymn* 21. 302–4; *Cat*. 29. 137–50.

(95) *Vie* 12. 20–6.

(96) *Law* 69 [913C].

(97) *Deeds* 57 [940 A].

(98) *Law* 11 [908 A].

(99) The same episode is told by Symeon in *Euch*. 1. 87–110 (this time in the first person) and by Nikitas in *Vie* 5. 1–31: this suggests that the story in Symeon's *Cat*. 22 is autobiographical.

(100) *Cat*. 22. 88–100.

(101) *Cat*. 22. 101–13.

(102) *Euch*. 2. 41–6. The striking words in *Hymn* 24. 63–83, where Symeon enumerates his sins, most probably refer to this period of his life.

(103) Krivochéine, SC 96. 23.

(104) McGuckin, 'Symeon', 23. Without entering into a detailed discussion of McGuckin's argument, one may say that the main weakness of his speculations about Symeon's biography lies in the fact that he entirely depends on I. Hausherr's chronology, regarding it as unquestionable. As has been said (see n. 87 above), there is a great deal of uncertainty about the dates of Symeon's life, and several chronologies have been advanced by scholars; any attempt to reconstruct Symeon's historical background on the basis of one particular chronology risks falling apart once this chronology is proved mistaken.

(105) *Hymn* 18. 137–58.

(106) There is a story in the *Apophthegmata*, how someone came to visit Abba Arsenios, and, having looked through the window, saw him standing in prayer and embraced with flame: see Arsenios 27 [*96* BC]. In a similar story Joseph of Panepho 'stood and opened his hands to the heaven; and his fingers became as ten torches of fire, and he said: "If you wish, you can become entirely as fire"': Joseph of Panepho 7 [220 D]. Cf. also Pamvo 1 [368 C] and 12 [372 A]; Sisois 14 [396 BC]; Silouanos 12 [412 C]; Theodore of Pherme 25 [193 AB]. Another much later example is the conversation between Seraphim of Sarov (died 1833) and N. Motovilov, when the face of a Russian saint became 'like the sun' and he gave out light and fragrance: see *Beseda Seraphima*, 17–22 (see the quotation in the General Conclusion at the end of the present study). Francis of Assisi, who was seen 'surrounded by marvellous light' during prayer, would be a parallel from Western spirituality: see *Flowers* 17. Something similar might have happened with Symeon the Studite in presence of his disciple. There is, however, one special detail in the case of Symeon the Studite: a fire was lit, while in other cases it simply appeared.

(107) *Hymn* 18. 221–3.

(108) Cf. *Vie* 12. 1–26. Servants were regarded as a common feature in Byzantine monasteries of that period; they attended their masters, served them meals and performed other necessary work: see Krausmüller, 'Stoudios', 74. Cf. the mention of a servant in Symeon, *Cat*. 4. 290–9.

(109) *Vie* 16. 3–5, 17–20; 21. 1; 22. 1.

(110) See Kontsevich, *Optina*, 9–10.

(111) Concerning this monastery see Janin, *Géographie*, 325–31.

(112) Literally, 'when they struck the wood'. In Eastern Orthodox monasteries a piece of wood is often used instead of a bell to call monks to church services.

(113) Vie 24. 9–27. 9.

(114) In a later section we shall specially discuss the question of frequency of Liturgy and Communion in both tradition and Symeon.

(115) *Asc*. 24. Cf. Symeon's *Cat*. 4. 11–12.

(116) *Cat*. 4. 1–18. 'There were not only lay people, but also many monks who were famous and renowned for virtue', Symeon mentions (13–14).

(117) *Cat*. 22. 314–18.

(118) *Cat*. 16. 78–107.

(119) *Vie* 30. 3 ff. J. McGuckin, on the basis of Hausherr's chronology, argues that Symeon was ordained by the Patriarch Anthony the Studite rather than by Nicholas Chrysovergis and that, in view of Symeon's rapid elevation to the hegumenate after only three years at St. Mamas, his previous transfer to this monastery from the Stoudion should be regarded as 'advancement' rather than 'expulsion': see 'Symeon', 24.

(120) Vie 30. 13–18.

(121) *Vie* 34. 12–21.

(122) J. McGuckin draws our attention to the fact that Symeon enjoyed significant patronage by the Byzantine aristocracy throughout his life: see 'Symeon', 25.

(123) *SC 96*. 35–6.

(124) Cf. *Hymn* 27. 131–2.

(125) *Euch*. 2. 230–3.

(126) *Vie* 38. 7–39. 14.

(127) *Vie* 39.14–40. 10.

(128) Hausherr, *Mystique*, p. xc. Nikitas describes the retirement of Symeon as a voluntary act: 'everything was all right' in Symeon's life, but cares of the monastery distracted him from silence, so he 'decided to organize the management in the monastery according to the ancient custom and become free from troubles…Then, by the decision of the Patriarch Sergios, he willingly leaves the post of hegumen…' (*Vie* 59. 1–12). Therefore, apart from the 'will' of Symeon there was a decision of the patriarch. Nikitas describes the conflict between Symeon and Stephen of Nikomidia (see below) as if it had arisen after Symeon's retirement. However, he indicates, for example, that Symeon returned 'to his flock' after the argument with Stephen (Vie 77. 2) and that he associated with monks who were 'under him [subordinated to him]' (*Vie* 82. 11). There are weighty considerations for the assumption that the conflict actually arose during the period when Symeon was still hegumen, and his retirement was caused by it. Cf. Kazhdan, 'Zamechaniya', 9.

(129) Stephen was ordained Metropolitan of Nikomidia in976, but, after leaving his diocese, he lived in Constantinople and was close to the patriarch and the emperor: *Vie* 74. 5–12; cf. Hausherr, *Mystique*; pp. li-lvi. He was the author of several theological and hagiographical writings, among them, very probably, is the hagiographical collection *Menologion of Basil II*: see Beck, *Literatur*, 531–2. In some passages of the 'Life' by Nikitas he is called 'Symeon of Alexini' (*Vie* 74. 6; 93. 25; 99. 4), but the origin of this name is not clear: see Lequien, *Oriens* I, 594.

(130) *Vie* 72. 22–6. Nikitas mentions 'hymns', an 'encomion', and a 'life' written by Symeon in honour of his spiritual father.

(131) In fact, the early Christian Church had not known the practice of formal canonization in a modern sense: the Church was alien to the idea (which was first expressed by the iconoclasts of the 8th century) that 'special human initiative is required in order to bring something into the realm of the "holy": Brock, 'Iconoclasm', 57. Veneration of a saint usually began in the area where he lived (the monastery, town, or even village) and either remained limited to this area (so called 'locally venerated' saints) or spread wider, sometimes throughout the Christian world. However, Symeon the New Theologian's lifetime coincided with the codification of saints by Symeon the Metaphrastis, who collected ancient lives of saints and made a new recension of them. As P. Lemerle points out, almost all the saints of the Metaphrastis' collection belonged to ancient times and only very few to the iconoclastic or post-iconoclastic epoch; it was a kind of 'antiquarianization' of saints: *Humanisme*, 293. 'The compilation of the Metaphrastic corpus and the Synaxarion of Constantinople', another scholar writes, 'and the opposition aroused by Symeon the New Theologian in his attempt to establish a cult of his spiritual father Symeon the Studite, indicate that the official Church was tending, from the end of the tenth century, to conceive of the communion of saints as a closed society, whose numbers were now more or less complete': Magdalino, 'Holy Man', 61. Symeon the New Theologian, with his idea of the possibility and necessity of being a saint, with his constant struggle against 'new heretics' who rejected

this possibility and with his self-established cult of Symeon the Studite, found himself in opposition to this movement and thus to the official Church. See the discussion of this matter in Chapter 6 of this study.

(132) *Vie* 75. 16–17.

(133) Cf. Darrouzès, *SC* 122. 9–10.

(134) *Hymn* 21. 54–68.

(135) *Hymn* 21. 118; 174–6; 317–18; 400–1.

(136) *Vie* 94. 1–22. Nikitas indicates elsewhere (see *Vie* 104. 18–19; cf. 108. 8–9) that the patriarch accepted the cult of the Studite and even took part in the celebrations organized by Symeon. Therefore, the fact that he later changed his mind may be explained only by the influence of Stephen.

(137) *Vie* 93. 1–12.

(138) *Vie* 100. 1–26. Nikitas informs us that the neighbourhood of the new monastery was hostile to Symeon: some people even threw stones at him; see *Vie* 112. 7–8.

(139) *Vie* 102. 14–103. 18.

(140) *Vie* 113–22.

(141) *Vie* 128. 1–129. 11.

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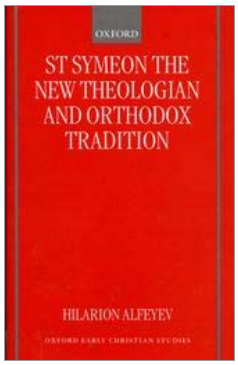

St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition
Hilarion Alfeyev

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Symeon and Holy Scripture

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Hilarion Alfeyev

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter examines Symeon the New Theologian's scriptural background, that is, his ways of approaching, studying and interpreting the Bible. Symeon's biblical exegesis might be defined as his own personal version of the monastic and liturgical traditions of hermeneutics, which in both cases are a synthesis of the Alexandrian and the Antiochene traditions. This chapter begins by pointing out the role of Scripture in Orthodox tradition and some aspects of its exegesis within the Orthodox Church. Symeon's attitude to Scripture, his way of quoting it and his methods of biblical interpretation are also discussed, along with biblical allusions and quotations in Symeon's writings, examples of Symeon's exegesis, and two basic kinds of allegory in his writings.

Keywords: Symeon the New Theologian, Bible, Scripture, biblical exegesis, Orthodox tradition, hermeneutics, allusions, quotations, allegory, Orthodox Church

We should now turn to the analysis of Symeon’s scriptural background, that is, his ways of approaching, studying and interpreting the Bible. Symeon’s biblical exegesis might be defined as his own personal version of the monastic and liturgical traditions of hermeneutics, which in both cases are a synthesis of the Alexandrian and the Antiochene traditions. This chapter will begin by pointing out the role of Scripture in Orthodox tradition and some aspects of its exegesis within the Church. Then Symeon’s attitude to Scripture, his way of quoting it and his methods of biblical interpretation will be examined.

1. Scripture in Orthodox Tradition

In the Orthodox East, Scripture and tradition are not regarded as two different sources of Christian belief. There is

only one source—tradition; and Scripture forms a part of it.[1] Scripture is not a basis of religious belief but is based on religious experience and reflects this experience.[2]

However, as a part of tradition, the Holy Bible undoubtedly occupies an exceptional place in the life of the Church. The Old Testament, which prefigures Christian realities; then the Gospels, which, after the death of Christ's immediate disciples, became the only source from which Christians could hear the voice of Jesus; and finally, the epistles written by the Apostles and accepted by the early Church as an inheritance from the first Christian generation—these main elements constitute the scriptural canon:

> **(p. 44)** Let us take refuge in the Gospel, as in Jesus' flesh, and in the Apostles, as in the presbytery of the Church. And the prophets, let us love them too, because they anticipated the Gospel in their preaching; they hoped for Him and awaited Him, and were saved by believing in Him...[3]

This statement of Ignatios can serve as a summary of the Christian approach to Scripture: the Gospels are understood as the 'flesh of Jesus', His incarnation in words; the writings of the Apostles as the Church's commentary on the Gospels; and the prophetic writings, or more widely the Old Testament, as an anticipation of Christ.

The notion of the Gospel as the flesh of Jesus was developed by Origen; in the whole of Scripture he sees the *κένωσις* (self-emptying) of God the Word, Who embodies Himself in the imperfect forms of human words:

> Everything which is recognized as a word of God, is the revelation of the embodied God the Word, Who in the beginning was with God [cf. John 1: 2] and then emptied Himself. This is why we regard the Word of God on the earth, when He became man, as something human; for the Word in the Scriptures always becomes flesh to dwell among us [cf. John 1: 14].[4]

Origen created in particular a multidimensional framework for the Christian typological interpretation of Scripture, having inherited the basic principles of this from both Judaic and Hellenistic traditions. According to Origen, apart from the letter, there is a hidden inner meaning in every scriptural passage: there is *θεωρία* ('contemplation') apart from *ἱστορία* (literal meaning).[5] This approach appeals primarily to the Old Testament, where everything can serve as a prototype of Christ. As to the New Testament, 'why should we look for the allegory, if the letter itself instructs?'[6]

Christ is a fulfilment of the Old Testament Law, which prefigured Him. But, as the Old Testament was just a shadow of the New, the New Testament in turn is a shadow of the kingdom to come.[7] This concept leads Origen not only to an eschatological interpretation of certain passages, but also to a form of exegesis that is connected with **(p. 45)** the inner mystical life of each individual person.[8] Both the Old and the New Testaments ultimately prefigure one's own spiritual experience. One of the classical examples of the mystical interpretation of Scripture is Origen's exegesis of the Song of Songs, where we pass far beyond the literal meaning and are transferred to another reality, which is only symbolized and prefigured by the scriptural passages.[9] After Origen, such an interpretation was to become fully established in Orthodox tradition: we can find it in Gregory of Nyssa and Alexandrians, as well as in monastic writers such as Evagrios, Makarios of Egypt, and Maximos the Confessor.

The last named, being a monk by upbringing, became a kind of link between Alexandrian scriptural approach of Origen and subsequent tradition, which included Symeon the New Theologian.[10] We can find all aspects of the Alexandrian biblical approach in Maximos. Like Origen, he divides Scripture into body and spirit.[11] Like Clement of Alexandria, he speaks of the two forms in which Scripture appears to people: the first, 'a general and public sight'; and the second, 'more hidden and accessible to a small number, to those who have already become Peter, James and John'.[12] Like all Alexandrians, he uses allegory widely in his interpretation of Scripture. Like Origen's and Gregory of Nyssa's, his allegory is usually connected with the inner spiritual life of a person:

> When the Word of God becomes bright and shining in us, and His face is dazzling as the sun, then also will His clothes be radiant, that is, the clear and distinct words of the Holy Scriptures [are] now no longer veiled [for us]. Then Moses and Elijah will stand beside Him, that is, the more spiritual meanings of the Law and the Prophets.[13]

(p. 46) Maximos inherited from the Alexandrians and partly from Dionysios the Areopagite the understanding of the interpretation of Scripture as *ἀναγωγή*, ascent.[14] The literal sense of Scripture is only a starting point; one should

always search for the higher mystical meaning of each passage, transferring oneself 'from the letter [*ἀπὸ τοῦ ῥητοῦ*] of Holy Scripture to its spirit [*ἐπὶ το πνεῦμα*]'.[15] The mystery of the biblical text is inexhaustible:[16] only the *ἱστορία* of Scripture is limited by its narrative, while its *θεωρία* is limitless.[17] Everything in Scripture is related to our contemporary reality:

> For though these things happened historically in type, yet they were written on our account, for our spiritual admonition, upon whom continually the things of Holy Scripture happen intelligibly, that we may transfer, if possible, the whole of Scripture to our intellect...[18]

With regard to the monastic tradition in general, it had a special attitude to Holy Scripture as a source of religious inspiration. Monks not only read and interpreted Scripture, but also learned it by heart.[19] Monastic tradition also introduced another way of using Scripture, namely the constant repetition of certain verses or passages, the so-called *μελέτη* (meditation): it was accomplished aloud or in a whisper.[20]

Monks were generally not very interested in 'scholarly' exegesis of Scripture: they learned the Bible through experience and understood it by carrying it into effect. Monastic sources also insist that one should apply everything written in Scripture to oneself in order to understand its hidden meaning. This practical side of Scripture is emphasized in the *Apophthegmata*. 'Do what is written', says abba Gerontios;[21] and this simple formula may serve as a motto of early monastic understanding of Scripture. Anthony's saying is also significant: 'Wherever you go, always have God before your eyes; whatever **(p. 47)** you do, have the testimony of the Holy Scriptures.'[22] Thus, Scripture must be present in the life of a monk as unceasingly as God Himself: every particular act must be 'approved' by the testimony of the Gospels.[23]

The monastic approach to Scripture, which might be defined as exegesis through experience, is summarized by Mark the Monk as follows:

> He who is humble and practises spiritual activity, when reading the divine Scripture will attribute everything to himself and not to others. Ask God to open the eyes of your heart, and you will see the profit from...the reading understood through experience...When reading the divine Scripture, try to comprehend that which is hidden in it...Read the words of the divine Scripture by your deeds and do not speak much, being proud of mere understanding.[24]

A similar type of exegesis is characteristic of the use of Scripture in the liturgical worship of the Orthodox Church. The aim of the reading of Scripture in church is to enable the faithful to participate in the reality described in it: the experience of the biblical personages must become the faithful's own experience. In the 'Great Canon' by Andrew of Crete, we find a whole gallery of biblical personages, from both the Old and New Testaments; each example of a scriptural hero is accompanied by a reference to the spiritual life of the listener (reader) or by the call to repentance:

> Adam was justly banished from Eden because he disobeyed one commandment of Thine, O Saviour. What then shall I suffer, for I am always rejecting Thy words of life?[25]

> Like the woman of Canaan, I cry to Thee: 'Have mercy on me, Son of David' [cf. Matt.15: 22]. Like the woman with an issue of blood, I touch the hem of Thy garment [Luke 8: 43–4]. I weep as Martha and Mary wept for Lazarus [John 11: 33].[26]

> The Priest saw me first, but passed by on the other side; the Levite looked on me in my distress, but despised my nakedness. O Jesus, sprung from Mary, do Thou come to me and take pity on me [cf. Luke 10: 31–3].[27]

(p. 48) In such an interpretation every biblical personage becomes a prototype of the believer.

In the liturgical texts for Holy Week we find many examples of scriptural exegesis with reference to the personal life of the faithful. Following Christ day by day, the believer himself becomes a participant in the events described in the Gospels. The episode of the withered fig tree (Matt. 21: 19) is commented on as follows:

> O brethren, let us fear the punishment of the fig tree, withered because it was fruitless; and let us bring worthy fruits of repentance unto Christ...[28]

The episode of the betrayal by Judas leads the author together with the listener into direct dialogue with Judas:

> What reason led thee, Judas, to betray the Saviour? Did he expel thee from the company of the Apostles? Did he deprive thee of the gift of healing...? How many are the blessings that thou hast forgotten! Thou art condemned for thine ingratitude...[29]

In the hymns devoted to the Crucifixion the author speaks in the person of Mary, and in the hymns devoted to Christ's burial, in the person of Joseph of Arimathea. On the night after Holy Friday the *Lenten Triodion* prescribes the service of the burial of Jesus Christ, in which everyone present takes part with lighted candles, and the following texts are sung:

> O Life, how canst Thou die? How canst Thou dwell in a tomb...?
>
> O Jesus, my sweetness and light of salvation, how art Thou hidden in a dark tomb? O forbearance ineffable, beyond all words!
>
> O thrice-blessed Joseph, bury the body of Christ, the Giver of life.[30]

The believer is so deeply involved in the liturgical drama of Holy Week that he enters into dialogue with all its heroes and with Christ Himself. The sufferings of Christ are lived through by the believer, becoming part of the latter's personal experience.

From the mystical typology of Origen and other Alexandrians, as well as from the monastic and liturgical traditions of the Orthodox Church, we can see that biblical exegesis had as its purpose not only a simple explanation of certain passages but also an investigation into their hidden content, with particular reference to the personal life **(p. 49)** of the reader (listener). The Holy Fathers through their exegesis of Scripture imparted their own spiritual experience to the reader and invited him to share it. Seeking the 'hidden' meaning within the scriptural letter, they tried to establish a direct link between Scripture and spiritual life: the aim was always that the *ἱστορία* of one's life should become a *θεωρία* of divine mysteries, an unceasing revelation of God through Scripture.

2. Symeon's Theory of Scripture

As a true representative of Eastern monasticism, Symeon inherited from his monastic background a profound love of Scripture and an intimate knowledge of it. His concept of Scripture in the life of the Christian is on the whole traditional. Like many ascetical writers, he points to the profit from reading Scripture for all Christians, especially for monks:

> For we have a great need...closely to search the divine Scriptures. For the Saviour has shown us their usefulness when saying: 'Search the Scriptures' [John 5: 39].[31]
>
> Nothing else is more useful for the soul which wants to meditate on the Law of God day and night, than to search the Holy Scriptures. For in them the design of the grace of Spirit is concealed...[32]

The reading of Scripture must be included in the everyday routine of a monk. Apart from services, in which Scripture is usually read, Symeon recommends to young monks three possible times a day for 'reading' in a cell:[33] after matins, after breakfast ('take a book and read a little'), and before evening prayer ('take a book and read some three pages').[34] As Nikitas informs us, Symeon himself regularly read Scripture, especially before matins and the Liturgy, and from early evening till midnight.[35]

Insisting upon the necessity of reading Scripture, Symeon emphasizes that only that reading is useful which is accompanied by fulfilment of what is read. When reading, one must 'look at oneself and **(p. 50)** reflect on one's soul as in a mirror'.[36] Here Symeon follows the teaching of Mark the Monk about 'attributing everything written in Scripture to oneself'. The Bible is a message addressed to the reader personally; it is not just a book which someone reads to demonstrate his erudition to others.[37]

This is why Symeon would reject what we now call the historical critical handling of Scripture. He regards the Bible not as an object of critical analysis but as prophetic inspiration leading to ever more profound faith:

> Let us now lay aside all vain and useless research…Let us obey the Master who says: 'Search the Scriptures'. Search them but do not discuss them too much. Search the Scriptures but do not organize arguments concerning their external meaning. Search the Scriptures in order to learn about faith and hope and love.[38]

Secular scholars who dare to interpret Scripture without having received the grace of God are very often an object of Symeon's sharp criticism:

> When without having received grace from the Spirit consciously and knowingly, I run to interpret Scripture without any shame and give myself the rank of teacher with no other claim to it than this falsely-called knowledge [*ψενδωνύμῳ γνώσει*], will God leave such conduct unjudged and demand no account of me? Certainly not.[39]

Like the Alexandrians, Symeon acknowledges the existence of two levels in Scripture: external and internal, *ἱστορία* and *θεωρία*, letter and spirit. But he is not inclined to see a hidden meaning in each passage or phrase. He emphasizes that we must try to recognize which words by Jesus or the Apostles were said directly and require literal explanation, and which were said 'in proverbs' and need an understanding of a hidden meaning.[40] Sometimes he criticizes an excessive **(p. 51)** passion for allegorism, which leads too far from the actual meaning of Scripture.[41]

How can one achieve a true understanding of Scripture? Symeon compares Scripture with a house built 'in the midst of secular and Hellenistic knowledge', and a true understanding of Scripture with a closed chest, which is impossible to open using only human sagacity[42] There are two keys to open it: the fulfilment of God's commandments and the grace of God. The first depends on man, the second on God: there is a *συνέργεια* (co-operation) of man and God in opening the hidden meaning of Scripture. When the chest is unlocked, one gains access to true 'knowledge' (*γνῶσις*) and 'the revelation of mysteries that are hidden and veiled in the letter' of Scripture.[43]

Therefore the mystery of Scripture is opened only to those who try to embody what is read by practising it and who receive a revelation from God. In fact, Symeon incorporates here the notion of the true gnostic who possesses knowledge hidden from the majority. He quotes a maxim, in which God is the speaker: 'My mystery [belongs] to Me and to My own.'[44] There are God's 'own' people, to whom the meaning of Scripture is opened, and 'others', from whom it is concealed:

> For the divine things…are recorded in writing and are read by everybody, but they are disclosed only to those who have warmly repented, and who through sincere repentance have been well purified…For them the depths of the Spirit are revealed, and from them flows forth the word of God's wisdom and knowledge…But for others it is unknown and concealed, and in no way is unlocked by Him Who opens the mind of the faithful to understand the Scriptures.[45]

There were many people, Symeon says, who interpreted Scripture but did not meet Christ Who spoke through it.[46] The question is about the living presence of Christ in Scripture: this idea is derived from the early Fathers, but in Symeon it acquires a personal colour. For him this presence is real and concrete: he actually feels or even sees Christ when reading, and this is why his love for Scripture is so profound. In the 'Hymns' he tells us about his vision of the uncreated divine light which he received 'when reading and searching the words and observing their combinations'.[47] He also claims that **(p. 52)** the divine light explains to him the Scriptures, increases his knowledge and teaches him mysteries.[48]

Thus the reading of Scripture becomes a source of mystical inspiration. We can distinguish several steps by which, according to Symeon, one can ascend to such a level of understanding of Scripture. On the first step a man reads the Bible, paying attention to the 'words and their combinations', that is, trying to understand the literal meaning of the book. On the next step he starts to attribute scriptural texts to himself and to fulfil the commandments as if they were given to him personally. The more carefully he follows the Gospel in his life, the deeper his knowledge of the 'hidden' meaning of Scripture becomes. Then God Himself appears to the man, and, by the grace of the Holy Spirit and through communion with the divine light the man becomes *γνωστικός*, that is, acquires perfect knowledge of the mystical meaning of Scripture.

3. Biblical Allusions and Quotations in Symeon

Symeon quotes the Bible and alludes to it very frequently. Scholars have found 1,036 direct or indirect allusions to the Old Testament, and 3,764 to the New in the corpus of Symeon's writings published so far. The first number includes 458 allusions to the Psalms, 184 to Genesis, and 63 to Exodus; the second includes 858 to Matthew, 684 to John, 439 to Luke, 138 to Mark, 122 to 1 John, and 1,403 to Pauline corpus (including 1 Timothy and Hebrews).[49]

The figures show that the Gospels attracted Symeon much more than other parts of the Bible (2,119 allusions): this is understandable, because, as Symeon very often points out, God Himself speaks through the Gospels.[50] Symeon's christocentricity forces him to appeal repeatedly to the Pauline epistles. Frequent use of Johannine writings can be explained by their mystical character: they contain Symeon's favourite themes, such as the vision of God, the divine light and love. As regards the Psalms, it was natural for Symeon to allude **(p. 53)** to them: they were so widely used in church worship that each monk knew them by heart.[51] The book of Genesis is quoted with particular frequency, because Symeon was specially interested in the story of Adam and Eve in its connection with the Incarnation of God.[52]

Quoting the Bible, Symeon rarely quoted biblical passages literally; more often he paraphrased them. This is explained by the fact that he quoted from memory, as was the common practice among all ancient writers. Here is an example from 'Hymn 21':

> For the first [John the Baptist] shouts and announces to all
> That he is not worthy to undo
> Even the strap or the buckle of His sandals [Luke 3: 16];
> And the other one [Paul], when he ascended to the third heaven
> And then was taken to paradise...declared:
> 'I have heard words, which I cannot utter [2 Cor. 12: 4];
> And God lives in an inaccessible light' [1 Tim. 6: 16].[53]

There are three quotations here, and not one of them is exact. One might think that such imprecision is caused by the necessity to adapt the passages to certain poetic metres; but we find the same type of quotation in Symeon's prose works.

One particular case where Symeon is inclined to give literal quotations is when he selects biblical passages in order to illustrate his own ideas: this way of quoting was widespread in the ascetical literature. For example, in *Eth*. 11 he quotes literally three passages from Ezekiel (34: 2–5; 34: 10; 33: 6) against unworthy priests. One might think that such long passages from a book which was not often read in the church would have been copied from a manuscript of the Bible and not quoted from memory; however, Symeon by mistake ascribes the passages to Joel and not to Ezekiel: this may mean that he did not have a book before him.[54] In another example, *Eth*. 4, speaking of love, he gives a selection of biblical texts concerning it: some of them are given literally, but the majority are paraphrased. Moreover, side by side with direct quotations there are many indirect biblical allusions, so that the total sum of allusions in 109 lines achieves a figure **(p. 54)** of 31 (one allusion in every 3–4 lines).[55] The impression given to us from this passage is again that Symeon is quoting from memory.

Although the Bible was a permanent source of inspiration for Symeon, biblical texts themselves rarely served as driving forces behind the development of his thought: much more often he was set in motion by the desire to express his own ideas and he used biblical images to confirm them. Here is a description of the 'mystical pursuit' of God, which is a good example of such a type of allusion:

> I never turned back....
> I did not slow down my running...
> But with all my strength,
> With all my power
> I searched for Him Whom I did not see.
> I looked around the roads
> And behind the fences, to discover where He might appear.
> I was filled with tears
> And I asked everyone

Who had ever seen Him...
The prophets, Apostles and Fathers...
I asked them to tell me
Where they had ever seen Him...
And when He spoke with me,
I started running with all my strength...
And I saw Him totally,
And He united Himself entirely with me.[56]

Symeon describes here his personal experience but the external form of the description is evoked by the Song of Songs 3: 2–4. It has been stated by scholars that Symeon was not deeply affected by the Song of Songs, unlike other mystics, as he rarely quoted this book.[57] One thinks, however, that all mystics who interpreted or widely used the Song of Songs, including Hippolytos, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Theodoret (as well as Bernard of Clairvaux, Meister Eckhart, and John of the Cross) were not so much attracted by the literal meaning of the book: they used this text and its imagery to describe their own personal but 'indescribable' experience, and they employed biblical **(p. 55)** language to give form to their experience consistent with biblical revelation. Symeon often preferred a direct way of describing his mystical experience, and this is why he did not usually need to resort to biblical language and imagery However, biblical texts were quoted by Symeon so far as they reflected to his own experience.[58]

4. Examples of Symeon's Exegesis

Symeon was not an excrete in the same sense as Origen or John Chrysostom. He did not usually explain biblical texts verse by verse and only a few passages from the Bible were interpreted by him precisely and consecutively. Among them there are two 'key texts' from the Gospels: the Beatitudes (Matt. 5: 3–12) and the Prologue of John's Gospel. Let us now look at Symeon's explanation of these passages in comparison with some of the classical Alexandrian and Antiochene interpretations, in order to make clear what is genuinely new and what is borrowed from tradition in his exegesis.

Symeon devotes to the Beatitudes two 'Catechetical Discourses': the second and the thirty-first. In *Cat*. 31 he gives a consecutive and brief explanation of the Beatitudes, regarding each of them as a step on the ladder to spiritual perfection.[59] The concept of the Beatitudes as a ladder reminds us of Gregory of Nyssa,[60] but it is combined in Symeon with Mark the Monk's idea of the Gospel as a mirror of one's inner life (see above). Emphasis is given to the practical side of the Beatitudes, as in John Chrysostom's 'Homily 15 on Matthew', where the Beatitudes are expounded as a practical guide to 'true philosophy', that is, true Christian life.

In Symeon, the blessing of the 'poor in spirit' (Matt. 5: 3) is associated with the ideal of humility and dispassion: one must bear every offence or dishonour without being pained or burdened.[61] This is the **(p. 56)** traditional understanding of the first Beatitude. 'I think, poverty in spirit is deliberate humility', says Gregory of Nyssa, referring to 2 Cor. 8: 9.[62] John Chrysostom and Makarios demonstrate the same approach.[63]

'Blessed are those who mourn' (Matt. 5: 4). Symeon emphasizes that the Lord does not say 'who have mourned', but 'who mourn', that is, who constantly mourn: here we have the traditional monastic concept of unceasing mourning.[64] Both Gregory of Nyssa and Chrysostom insist that mourning for sins is implied in this Beatitude.[65] For Gregory the main reason for mourning is 'deprivation of the good', which is God Himself and which he compares with the light: people after the fall of Adam became blind and should mourn about their deprivation of the divine light.[66] This concept is extremely close to what Symeon usually says about the reason for mourning.[67]

'Blessed are the meek' (Matt. 5: 5). How can one mourn every day and not become meek? Symeon asks. Anger of the soul is extinguished by mourning, as is a flame of fire by water.[68] The comparison is borrowed from John Klimakos: 'As the gradual pouring of water on a fire completely extinguishes the flame, so the tears of true mourning are able to quench every flame of anger and irritability.'[69] For Maximos the Confessor 'the rejection of lust and anger' is a synonym of meekness.[70]

The 'hunger of righteousness' (Matt. 5: 6) means hunger for God, because God is righteousness, Symeon says.[71] In this he is close to Gregory of Nyssa, who indicates that 'under the name of righteousness the Lord offers Himself to the listeners'.[72]

Turning to the next step, Symeon asks: 'Who are the merciful?' (Matt. 5: 7) Those who give money or feed the poor? No'. The merciful are those, he answers, who have a constant compassion for the **(p. 57)** poor, the widows, and the orphans, and weep warm tears for them. Symeon cites Job as an example: 'I wept for every weak person' (Job 30: 25).[73] Like Isaac the Syrian, Symeon emphasizes the importance of having a merciful heart.[74] Mercy is not just occasional acts of philanthropy, but first of all a permanent personal quality: to be merciful means to be able to weep for people.[75] Gregory of Nyssa also understood mercy as an inner quality: 'Mercy is an inclination full of love for those who bear something arduous with suffering...This is connected with sorrow.'[76]

Unless the soul achieves all the qualities indicated above, it cannot be 'pure in heart' (Matt. 5: 8). But the soul which achieves them 'sees God everywhere and is reconciled with Him'.[77] Here Symeon is again very close to Gregory of Nyssa. The latter discusses the possibility of the vision of God, 'Whom no man has seen, nor can see' (1 Tim. 6: 16), and expounds the doctrine of the vision of God in His energies.[78] Maximos the Confessor also emphasizes the mystical aspect of this Beatitude:

> This is why the Saviour says, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God', because He is hidden in the heart of those who believe in Him. They will see Him and the treasures in Him when they purify themselves by love and self-mastery, and the more intensely they strive the fuller will their vision be.[79]

When the soul sees God, peace is established between God and it: so the soul becomes a 'peacemaker' (Matt. 5: 9).[80] Unlike John Chrysostom, who speaks of peace between people,[81] Symeon puts an accent on reconciliation with God.

> Finally, one becomes able to 'rejoice and be glad' when persecuted [Matt. 5: 10–12]: For he who has shown worthy penitence and then has become humble...who has become worthy of daily mourning and becomes meek, **(p. 58)** who hungers and thirsts with his soul for the 'Sun of righteousness' (Mal. 4: 2), becomes merciful and compassionate...and a peacemaker, and is found worthy to be called a son of God. Such a man is able, even though he is persecuted, beaten, reproached, abused, insulted...to endure it with joy and unspeakable gladness.[82]

The discourse ends with the description of our Master Who stands above the ladder: 'when we have arrived there we shall see Him as far as a man is able to do so, and receive from His hands the kingdom of heaven.'[83] Again one remembers the end of Gregory's 'Beatitudes' with the indication that the Lord Himself is a reward for those who mounted the ladder of divine ascent.[84]

Thus in *Cat*. 31 Symeon, demonstrating a considerable dependence on the traditional, especially the Alexandrian, exegesis of the Beatitudes, simply reminds his listeners of what has been said by earlier Fathers, and we can hardly find anything new in his exegesis. However he returns to the Beatitudes in *Cat*. 2, where we find a different type of exegesis. Here he does not give a consecutive account of the Lord's commandments, but mentions only some of them; the explanation itself, however, is much more original. The main theme of the discourse is 'life-giving mortification' (*ζῳοποιὸς νέκρωσις*): this is, in fact, one of Symeon's favourite themes. A man must 'deny himself (cf. Matt. 16: 24) and die to the world before entering the way of good deeds.[85] Symeon intends to speak of the divine commandments, but he starts with an indication of the purpose of Christian life: 'to find Christ and to see Him, as He is in His beauty and attractiveness'.[86] Symeon shows that seeing God is in fact the climax of all the Beatitudes, which are only a means to acquire it:

> When the soul is always being watered and made fruitful by tears...it becomes meek...and desires with hunger and thirst to learn God's judgements. By these virtues the soul will become merciful and compassionate, so that through all these things its heart becomes pure and, as has been promised, it thus attains to the vision of God and clearly sees His glory.[87]

Therefore, starting from the vision of God as the aim of all virtues, Symeon speaks only about this and finishes with this. The unity of the discourse is conditioned not by any external factor, such as the text of the Beatitudes, but by Symeon's own concept; the text serves as a confirmation of the concept. In other words, Symeon is not interested in the consecutive explanation of the text, but in the development **(p. 59)** of his idea. He highlights the expressions which are important for him, while virtually ignoring the other verses. It is precisely the phrase 'they shall see God' (Matt. 5: 8) which interests him more than anything else in the Beatitudes, because it is for him the top of the

ladder, the culmination of one's spiritual journey.

The same subjectivity in the choice of biblical verses and their interpretation may be observed in *Eth*. 10, where Symeon gives an explanation of the Prologue of John's Gospel. Here he quotes literally John 1: 1–5 and immediately emphasizes the word 'light'. The Father, the Son and the Spirit are the one light shining in the darkness. God is present everywhere, and the darkness of sin and the material world did not comprehend Him. From the beginning the true Light, which enlightens every man that comes into the world (John 1: 9), was in the world, even before the world was created; because the world pre-existed in God.[88]

In John 1: 12–14 Symeon highlights one verse: 'we beheld His glory.' Explaining it, he speaks of the spiritual birth and transformation which happen to people in Holy Baptism, when they 'become light in the Light and recognize Him Who gave birth to them, because they see Him'.[89] Not only Baptism, but also the Eucharist enables us to see God:

> That Baptism alone is not enough for us for salvation, but that to partake of the flesh and precious blood of Jesus and God is even better suited to the purpose and more necessary for us, listen to this: 'And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us' [John 1: 14]. And that it was said about [Holy Communion], listen to the Lord Who says: 'He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood, abides in Me and I in him' [John 6: 56]. When this has happened and we have been baptized spiritually by the most Holy Spirit…when the Word which became flesh lives in us as light…then we will have seen His glory that the only Son receives from the Father. At the very moment when we are born spiritually by Him and from Him…we will have seen the glory of His divinity, glory as the Only-begotten from the Father…[90]

Thus to Symeon everything in the Prologue of John serves as a confirmation of his concepts. The difference between him and the ancient commentators of John's Gospel is obvious. Origen devoted to John 1: 1–7 two volumes of his commentary of the fourth Gospel; he speaks in particular of the divine light but not in such a personal way as Symeon does. Moreover, Origen draws a distinction between the light of the Father and of the Son, while Symeon insists upon the **(p. 60)** unity of the light of the Holy Trinity.[91] John Chrysostom in his commentary emphasizes the moral side of the Gospel narrative: he is not very interested in its mystical aspect.[92] Cyril of Alexandria uses each verse of John's Prologue to demonstrate the equality of the Son to the Father against his opponents in the contemporary christological polemic.[93] None of the three mentioned, when interpreting the Prologue, speaks of personal union with God, of the experience of the divine light, or of the Eucharist as a way to this experience.

The seal of the same novelty lies on many other exegetical passages of Symeon. In *Eth*. 1 and 2 he explains the story of Adam and Eve in its christological and mariological aspects. The idea of Christ as the second Adam and Mary as the new Eve derives from Paul, Justin, and Irenaeus;[94] the symbolism of the eighth day, when paradise was created, is also traditional.[95] But the exposition itself has a fresh sound, especially when Symeon speaks of the mystical marriage of God with men:

> [The archangel] came down to present the mystery to the Virgin and said: 'Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you' [Luke 1: 28]. And with this word the Word immanent, coeternal and consubstantial [*ὁ ἐνυπόστατος καί ὁμοούσιος καί συναΐδιος*] with God the Father, entered the Virgin's womb, and, through the coming down and the cooperation of His consubstantial Spirit, the Word assumed flesh endowed with a soul and intelligence…and He became man. Such is the indescribable union, such is the mystical marriage of God. This is how the exchange between God and man occurred.[96]

Then, taking Luke 8: 21 in the literal sense, Symeon explains how people can become mother and brothers of Christ, and how God can be born from the saints:

> As God, the Word of the Father, entered the Virgin's womb, so likewise this Word, Which we received, is found in us ourselves, as a seed…We conceive **(p. 61)** Him not bodily, as the Virgin and Mother of God conceived Him, but spiritually, though none the less essentially, we possess in our heart the One Whom the pure Virgin conceived.[97]

In*Eth*. 2 the story of the forefathers is intertwined with the exegesis of Rom. 8: 29–30. Symeon speaks here of divine

predestination, arguing that everybody is predestined by God to salvation. Although Symeon discusses the same subject as in*Eth*. 1 and explains the same text, the contents of the two discourses are very dissimilar. We can see how he finds different ways of interpreting the same story, without repeating himself or other commentators.

These examples show that in his interpretation of biblical texts Symeon generally followed tradition and did not avoid using the ideas of preceding commentators. However, he had his own new words to say about several passages and his bright individuality was reflected in his exegesis of Scripture.

5. From Letter to Spirit

Symeon did not belong to any particular school of interpretation and did not use any specific exegetical method; both literal and allegorical exegesis can be found in his writings. Like Origen, he is sometimes very attentive to the letter of the biblical text; but in explanation he usually goes further and shows exactly how the external form of a passage corresponds to its internal meaning. Here are some examples.

Explaining Matt. 12: 36 ('Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof), Symeon gives his interpretation of what the 'idle word' means. The initial meaning of the Greek *ἀργός* (idle) is 'without work', 'doing nothing' (from *ἀ*—privation, and *ἔργον*—work).[98] Therefore,

> The idle word is not only…the useless one, but also the one which we pronounce before practising it and receiving knowledge of it through experience. If I without despising worldly glory and rejecting it with my whole heart…teach others about it and recommend them to avoid it, is my word not idle, non-observant and vain?[99]

(p. 62) Correspondingly, a person who interprets Scripture without practising God's commandments will be judged by God as one who steals the dignity of a teacher without God's will.[100]

In the exegesis of Eph. 5:16 ('Redeeming the time, because the days are evil') Symeon discusses how one should 'redeem the time', using images taken from the life of merchants. The verb *ἐξαγοράζω* ('to redeem') means 'to buy up', or simply 'to buy'. Our earthly life is the time for commerce. We see that some merchants run fast to the market, leaving the others behind them, and on arriving immediately strike bargains in order to make a profit. But the others go to the market without hurry, waste their time in chatting with friends or in eating and drinking; as a result they remain without profit. The same happens in spiritual life. Eternal goods and eternal life are sold: the price includes bearing disasters and temptations, as well as mortification of the body. One person uses each opportunity to 'redeem the time' through patience, fasting, vigil and other virtues; another wastes his life without profit. As a result the first is saved and the second is not.[101]

In his interpretation of 2 Cor. 12: 3–4 ('And I knew such a man…how that he was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words, which it is not possible for a man to utter') Symeon explains that it is characteristic of both Jesus Christ and Paul to conceal mystical meaning under sensible examples. What, then, Symeon asks, is the inner meaning of the term *ῥῆμα* (word)?*Τὸ ῥῆμα* is a synonym of *ὁ λόγος*; the external meaning is simply 'the word which is pronounced by human mouth and heard by human ears': the examples of Matt. 8: 8; Job 2: 9; Ps. 35/36: 3 follow. But the *πρώτη θεωρία* (first, or initial meaning) of the term is the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Word of the Father, as the Holy Spirit is the Father's mouth. Both our word cannot be heard unless it is pronounced by the mouth and the Father's Word cannot be seen or heard unless It is revealed by the Holy Spirit, when the Spirit illuminates us.[102] Therefore,

> The unspeakable words which divine Paul heard…are nothing else than the mystical and truly inexpressible contemplations [*θεωρίαι*] through illumination by the Holy Spirit and sublime unknowable knowledge [*ἄγνωστοι γνώσεις*], that is, invisible contemplations [*ἀθέατοι θεωρίαι*] of the supra-bright and supra-transcendent glory and divinity of the Son and Word of God.[103]

(p. 63) Thus the investigation of the literal meaning of biblical expressions leads Symeon to their spiritual interpretation with reference to the mystical life. We remember that Origen and Maximos the Confessor, among other Fathers, widely used this method of exegesis (see above). The interpretation of Scripture is always a way, a journey, an *ἀναγωγή* (ascent). In this way the textual work is the first step, and one cannot reach the top without

passing through it.

6. From Allegory to Mystical Typology

Though Symeon criticized those who 'falsely allegorize' (*ἀλληγοροῦσι κακῶς*) Scripture, 'attributing what is said in the present tense to the future, and understanding what is said in the future tense as if it had already happened and occurred every day',[104] the question here, in fact, concerns exaggerated and extreme examples of the allegorical method, when the literal meaning of Scripture is completely abandoned. In general Symeon considered allegory as a necessary component of exegesis and, following Maximos the Confessor and the Alexandrians, widely used it in his interpretation of Scripture.

One might distinguish two basic kinds of allegory in Symeon's writings. To the first kind one would ascribe all symbolical interpretations of biblical passages when they are not directly connected with Symeon's personal spiritual life; to the second those related to his own mystical experience. The first is more traditional and occurs mainly in Symeon's prose, in particular, in the 'Ethical Discourses'; the second is largely original and, though occurring everywhere in Symeon, is especially characteristic of his 'Hymns'. There is, however, no clear border-line between those two kinds of allegory: frequently Symeon starts with the first and then moves on to the second (but not usually vice versa).

Examples of the first kind include, in particular, the allegories of the Old Testament images and events which were influenced by the Alexandrian tradition or could have been borrowed by Symeon from this tradition, mainly through church worship. Noah's Ark is a symbol of the Mother of God, and Noah is a figure of Christ.[105] The aged **(p. 64)** Isaac who cannot recognize his son Jacob is a symbol of spiritual blindness.[106] Egypt symbolizes the 'darkness of passions',[107] or worldly life in general.[108] But the darkness mentioned in Psalm 17/18: 9–11 ('and darkness was under His feet…He made darkness His secret place; His pavilion round about Him were dark waters') signifies the flesh of Christ.[109] The promised land and the vessel of manna are figures of the Virgin Mary.[110] Moses in the cloud on the top of Mount Sinai is a symbol of the spiritual ascent to God and of the vision of God.[111]

The New Testament images also can be allegorized. Jesus, Moses, and Elijah in the scene of the Transfiguration of Christ represent the Holy Trinity; and the 'three tabernacles', which Peter wanted to make, symbolize body, soul, and spirit (Matt. 17: 4).[112] The sinful woman who came to Jesus with an alabaster box of ointment (Luke 7: 37–8) symbolizes a solitary who must love Jesus and wash His feet with tears of repentance.[113] The sitting of the Apostles in a room with **(p. 65)** closed doors (John 20: 19) signifies the life of a solitary in his cell.[114] The daughter of the woman of Canaan (Matt. 5: 22) is an image of the soul which needs to be healed by Jesus.[115] And the tax collector who left his box with money and followed Jesus (Matt. 9: 9) symbolizes a sinner who has rejected avarice and started spiritual life in Christ.[116]

Sometimes Symeon uses more developed and complicated allegories, such as the image of a human body, which was also used by Paul. In*Eth*. 4 Symeon explains what is meant by 'the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ' (Eph. 4: 13), citing as an example a body: the two feet symbolize faith and humility; shins, knees, and thighs symbolize ascetical efforts; the 'parts which need to be covered' signify unceasing prayer of the mind and 'the sweetness which is caused by the outpourings of tears'; the reins are the setting on fire of the soul in its desire for the contemplation of God (the quotation from Psalm 25/26: 2 is given: 'set fire to my reins and my heart'); the stomach with all the internal organs mean the 'spiritual workshop of the soul'. The list of the other parts of the body follows with the indication of their symbolic meaning; it finishes with the head, which symbolizes love.[117] To our contemporary taste such an allegory may seem unnatural and unattractive, but to the Byzantine ear it sounded rather pleasant and even poetic.[118]

The next example will show how several levels of allegory are joined in one exegetical passage, in which the element of textual interpretation is also present. We shall again look at the important exegetical development by Symeon in *Eth*. 1. After an exposition of the Old Testament typology of Christ and the Virgin Mary, Symeon turns to the interpretation of Matt. 22: 2–14: 'The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.' The parable is about the Father and the Son, Symeon states. God made a marriage for His Son:

> **(p. 66)** But the grandeur of His condescension makes my mind astonished…Because He brought as a bride to His Son the daughter of the one who revolted against Him, who had committed adultery and murder…!

> David, son of Jesse, who killed Uriah and committed adultery with his wife: his daughter Mary, I say, the irreproachable, the pure and most pure, He brought as a bride...[119]

Then, after the description of the Annunciation, when 'the mystical marriage of God' occurred, Symeon invites the reader to look more closely at the text of the parable. In the Greek original of the Gospel the king makes γάμοι (marriages) for his son. Why does Jesus use the plural instead of singular (γάμος)? asks Symeon, stressing the literal sense of the passage. 'Because the same marriage always happens...with each one of the faithful and sons of the day'. The parable of Jesus is also an allegory of the mystical experience through which one is born again in the Holy Spirit. We have already discussed the passage in which Symeon describes how one can conceive God and bear Him, like the Virgin Mary. This birth of God in us, according to Symeon, is at the same time our mystical renewal, when we partake to the Word of God and are united with Him.[120]

Although Symeon in*Eth*. 1 does not speak directly of his own mystical experience, such an experience is in fact implied by him: from a rather general type of allegory he moves on to a more personal type. Let us now look at several passages in which the scriptural text is regarded by Symeon as a type of his own mystical experience. This sort of interpretation was classified above as the second kind of allegory in Symeon.

As has been said, Symeon understands the Bible as a book in which the experience of God's relations with people is reflected. Each biblical personage has their own attitude to God, and no one in the Bible is neutral towards Him: everybody makes a choice for or against Him. Sometimes the relations with God are built on the foundation of absolute faith and obedience, as in the case of Abraham; sometimes they are a combination of sin and repentance, of going astray and turning back, as in the case of David; and sometimes they finish with complete falling away from God, as in the case of Judas. The way to God is never easy for anyone; it may contain many dramatic changes connected with deep suffering, but at the same time it may enable one to live out the reality of the blessing of the age to come and to contemplate God in this earthly life, as happened with saints and mystics.

(p. 67) Now Symeon realized that his own mystical experience corresponded to the experience of others, and he tried to find parallels for this in the Bible. There is a striking example of such an interpretation in 'Hymn 19', where all Sacred History is regarded by Symeon as a prototype of his own experience of the vision of God in a state of ecstasy:

> He who has passed beyond this dark air which David calls the wall [Ps. 17/18:29]
> And the Fathers called 'the sea of life',[121]
> He who has moved beyond them, has come into port...
> That is where paradise is, there, the tree of life,
> There, the bread of sweetness, there, the divine drink,
> There, the inexhaustible richness of the gifts of grace [*χαρισμάτων*].
> That is where the Bush burns without being consumed
> And where at once the sandals are unloosed from my feet,
> This is where the sea is divided and I cross over alone...
> That is where I see the piece of wood pushed into my heart
> And all that is bitter is changed into sweetness.
> There, I sucked the honey which flowed from the rock...
> There I ate the manna and bread of angels,
> And I no longer desired anything human.
> There I saw Aaron's staff, which had been withered and then blossomed,
> And I marvelled at God's mighty works.[122]

To understand the significance of this passage we must remember that each of the images cited has a very long history of interpretation in the patristic and liturgical traditions. For example, the 'divine drink', that is, the water which Moses derived from the rock (Num. 20: 8–11), is regarded as a type of the grace of Christ the Saviour.[123] The Burning Bush (Exod. 3: 2–4) symbolizes the Holy Virgin Who received God in Her womb 'without burning away'.[124] The crossing **(p. 68)** of the Red Sea (Exod. 14: 21–8) is a figure of Easter and the transition from death to life;[125] more often it is regarded as a figure of Baptism (cf. 1 Cor. 10: 2).[126] The piece of wood, by which Moses transformed the bitter water of Marah into sweet water (Exod. 15: 23–5), is a symbol of the Cross.[127] The 'honey from the rock'

(Exod. 17: 6) is sometimes interpreted as a symbol of Mary.[128] The manna which was given to Israel from God (Exod. 16: 4; 14–16) signifies the Eucharist, as was shown by Christ Himself (John 6: 31–51), or it signifies the Virgin Mary (see above).[129] The staff of Aaron that blossomed (Num. 17: 2–8) is regarded as a figure of the Virgin Mary,[130] or, according to another interpretation, of the Cross.[131]

Actually, for Symeon this wide spectrum of meanings stands behind each of the images listed, but he perceives in them first of all himself and his experience. For him these are not only events from the history of Israel, which prefigured the New Testament mysteries, but also the facts of his own mystical biography. Turning to the New Testament, Symeon again recognizes his own history in the events described, such as the Annunciation, the healing of the blind, and the resurrection of Lazarus:

> There…[my heart] heard the words: 'Hail, highly favoured,
> The Lord is with thee…!' [cf. Luke 1: 28]
> There I heard: 'Plunge thyself into the pool of tears!'
> I did so, and I immediately believed and recovered my sight [cf. John 9: 7].
> There I was put into the tomb of perfect humility,
> And Christ approached me with unbounded mercy
> And lifted the heavy stone of my evil deeds
> And said: 'Come, go forth from the world as from the tomb!' [cf. John 11: 38–44].[132]

(p. 69) We see that Symeon does not regard Scripture as an object for interpretation; rather he himself becomes the subject of the narrative: he comprehends the biblical story not from outside, as a commentator, but from inside, as if he were one of its personages. Mystical interpretation of the New Testament history finishes with the contemplation of Christ in His suffering, death, and resurrection, and the transmission to the age to come:

> There I saw how impassively my God suffered the passion[133]
> And how He died, the immortal One,
> And rose from the tomb without breaking the seals.
> There I saw the life to come and the incorruption
> That Christ bestows on those who seek Him,
> And I discovered that in me was the kingdom of heaven,
> Which is the Father, the Son and the Spirit…[134]

Sometimes very unusual mystical interpretations occur in Symeon. In *Cat*. 20 Jesus Christ is regarded as a prototype of a true spiritual father: Symeon the Studite is implied. If you see that the spiritual father eats and drinks with publicans and sinners (cf. Matt. 9: 11), do not think anything passionate and human, Symeon says. Do not dare to ask your spiritual father for permission to sit on his right hand or on his left (cf. Mark 10: 37). If he says to you and others, 'One of you shall betray me,' ask him with tears, 'Lord, is it I?' (cf. Matt. 26: 21–2). But to lean on his bosom (cf. John 13: 23) is not useful for you. When he is crucified, die together with him, if possible.[135] One can appreciate the significance of this interpretation when one bears in mind the importance of Symeon the Studite in the mystical life of Symeon the New Theologian.

In Holy Scripture Symeon is mainly attracted by the personages who had the experience of the vision of God. For this reason he refers to the life of the Apostle Paul, who met Christ on the way to Damascus (Acts 9: 3–5) and was caught up to the third heaven (2 Cor. 12: 2). Stephen's vision of Christ (Acts 7: 56) is also mentioned by Symeon. But what is most important for him is that the same experience can be repeated now, in his own life:

> What is this new marvel which is happening now again?
> Now again God wants to be seen by sinners,
> **(p. 70)** He Who formerly ascended into the heavens…
> And after that only Stephen, as we have heard,
> Saw the heavens opened and then said:
> 'I see the Son standing at the right of the glory of the Father'…
> But today, what wants this strange thing which is happening…?
> I found Him, the One Whom I saw from afar,

> Whom Stephen had seen when the heavens opened
> And Whose sight had later blinded Paul...[136]

If in this passage Symeon regards his own experience as equivalent to that of the biblical personages, in some others he appears to regard it as even more important. Thus in '*Hymn* 51' Symeon lists the personages from both the Old and the New Testaments, claiming that their experience was much less striking than his own. Moses saw God in the darkness of Sinai only once, while Symeon sees Him as unspeakable light constantly. Paul was caught up to the third heaven one time fourteen years before he wrote about it, while Symeon was caught to the ecstasy of contemplation many times. Stephen saw Christ before his death, while Symeon has seen Him since his youth throughout the whole of his life. Enoch and Elijah were lifted up into heaven and avoided death, while Symeon has already 'surpassed death'.[137]

The Old Testament events prefigure the New Testament realities, but the whole of the Bible is at the same time only a shadow of what may happen to a man in the mystical experience:

> Elijah was lifted up in a fiery chariot, and before him Enoch...
> But what is this compared to what is happening to us?
> And how can there be any comparison between shadow and truth...?
> I think, like the sea divided by the rod [of Moses] of old,
> And the manna that came down from heaven,
> These are only types and symbols of the truth.
> The sea is a type of Baptism, the manna of the Saviour;
> In the same manner they are symbols and a type
> Of the realities endued with an incomparable transcendence.[138]

The manna stopped and the people who ate it died, while the flesh of the Saviour makes us immortal, Symeon continues. Israel had to wander in a desert for forty years, while we are led by God from death to life and from earth to heaven as soon as we are baptized and have communicated in His blood and flesh. 'God has shown me a **(p. 71)** new heaven and has settled within me: no one of the ancient saints was made worthy of this,' Symeon claims.[139]

How far is Symeon in agreement with the patristic tradition when insisting upon the priority of his own mystical experience to that of biblical personages? The idea that the Bible prefigures one's mystical experience is by no means new in the Fathers: we detected it earlier in the thought of Origen and Maximos the Confessor (one can certainly add other names). That Scripture is to be understood through experience was also a commonplace, particularly in monastic literature. One can even recall some stories from hagiographical sources about people who began fulfilling God's commandments before or without reading Scripture. Mary of Egypt, whose 'Life' was very popular in Byzantium,[140] had not ever read Scripture before she went into the desert; having achieved a state of spiritual perfection, she became able to quote the Bible by heart without knowing its text: reading was completely replaced by ascetical experience.[141] Another saint, upon entering the monastery, was given three verses of Psalm I as a rule for action; after this he went to a desert and spent many years in a strict abstinence, with unceasing prayer 'day and night': for this man the three verses were sufficient for the 'way of salvation and learning of piety' (*ad viam salutis et scientiam pietatis*).[142]

In fact Symeon develops the same concepts, emphasizing that the participation of Christ in the Holy Spirit is prior to all formal expressions of this, including Scripture. After all, Scripture is only a means for life with God and in God:

> A person who has consciously accepted within himself God Who gives knowledge to men, has carefully read all of Scripture. He no longer needs to read books, having harvested all of the fruit from his reading...Whoever converses with the One who inspired the divine writings, and has been initiated by Him into the secrets of the hidden mysteries, becomes for others a book inspired by God. He bears within himself the old and new mysteries engraved there by the finger of God.[143]

This is not, therefore, a rejection of the necessity of reading Scripture; rather it is an extremely acute expression of the idea, which is a commonplace in Eastern Christian tradition, that one should ascend **(p. 72)** from the letter of Scripture to its inner meaning, and from the latter—to Him Who stands behind biblical words.

Summarizing Symeon's biblical approach, one can say that he understands Scripture as a part of the great tradition, into which he feels himself to be deeply incorporated. In his interpretation of biblical passages he does not deliberately depart from a traditional understanding but bases himself on the exegesis of preceding Fathers, using both literal and allegorical methods. However, regarding the Bible as a history of God's relations with people, Symeon always searches for parallels between his own experience and that of biblical personages. This leads him to quite personal explanations of scriptural passages in a mystical way. The latter type of interpretation appears to be the most original and engaging aspect of Symeon's attitude to the Bible.

Notes:

(1) Arseniev, 'Teaching', 16 ff.; Bouyer, *Église*, 27–30; idem., *Meaning*, 1; Bulgakov, *Church*, 20 ff.; Ware, *Church*, 196–7. Cf. also Roques, *Univers*, 226 (the concept of Scripture as part of tradition in Dionysios the Areopagite).

(2) On tradition as the *ὑπόθεσις* (background, basis) of Scripture see Lossky, *Image*, 142–3.

(3) Ignatios of Antioch, *Philad*. 5 [124].

(4) Origen, *Philoc*. 15. 19. 26–31 [438].

(5) Origen speaks of the three meanings of Scripture: the literal, the moral, and the spiritual (anagogical), which correspond to the threefold division of the human person (body, soul, and spirit): *Princ*. 4. 2. 4 [312–13]; cf. Torjesen, *Procedure*, 39–43. In practice, however, Origen does not usually make a clear distinction between the moral and spiritual meanings; the question is normally about the two meanings of each passage: the historical (literal) and allegorical (spiritual).

(6) *Numb*. 11. 1. 11–12 [77]

(7) Daniélou, *Origen*, 170–1.

(8) Ibid. 163 ff.

(9) Cf. Ibid. 166; Simonetti, *Interpretation*, 47–8.

(10) There are several scholarly investigations into the connection between Maximos and Origen: Sherwood, *Ambigua*; idem., 'Origenismus'; Ivánka, 'Origenismus'. On Maximos' scriptural interpretation see Sherwood, 'Exposition'; Thunberg, 'Symbol', 295–302; Blowers, *Exegesis*

(11) 'The Old Testament [can be understood] as a body, and the New Testament as a spirit and mind. Moreover…the historical letter of the entire Holy Scripture, Old Testament and New, is a body while the meaning of the letter…is the soul…For as man who as ourselves is mortal in what is visible and immortal in the invisible, so also does Holy Scripture, which contains a visible letter which is passing and a hidden spirit underneath the letter which never ceases to exist, organize the true meaning of contemplation': Maximos the Confessor, *Myst*. 6 [684 AB].

(12) *Theol. Chapt*. 1. 97[1121 C–1124 A]. Cf. the concept of the *γνωστικὸς τῶν γραφῶν* in Clement of Alexandria, *Strom. 6*. 15 [498].

(13) *Theol. Chapt*. 2. 14 [1132 A].

(14) The term is derived from Philo and is used in the *Corpus Areopagiticum* for the allegorical interpretation of Scripture: see *Hier*. 2. 5. 7–13 [16]; cf. Rorem, *Symbolism*, 99–105; 110–16. Maximos the Confessor prefers the term *ἀναγωγὴ to the ἀλληγορία*; as P. Sherwood mentions, the latter term is infrequent in Maximos: 'Exposition', 207.

(15) *Theol. Chapt*. 2. 18 [1133 AB].

(16) Cf. Blowers, *Exegesis*, 149.

(17) Sherwood, 'Exposition', 203.

(18) Maximos the Confessor, *Quest. Thal.* 52. 173–7 [425].

(19) In the *Pachomian koinonia* it was compulsory for each monk: see Palladios, *Laus. Hist.* 32. 12 [160]; cf. Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 81.

(20) See *Apophthegmata*, Achilas 5 [125 AB]; cf. Burton-Christie, 'Cassian', 343.

(21) Gerontios 1 [153 AB].

(22) Anthony 3 [76 C].

(23) Cf. Burton-Christie, *Word*, 166.

(24) *Law* 4 [905 B], 24 [908 D], 87 [916 C]. Let us recall that this book was definitely known to Symeon: *Vie* 4. 16–19.

(25) Cant. One [*Triodion*, 378].

(26) Cant. Eight [*Triodion*, 408].

(27) Cant. One [*Triodion*, 379].

(28) Holy and Great Monday, Matins [*Triodion*, 516].

(29) Holy and Great Friday, Service of the Twelve Gospels, *Sessional Hymn*[*Triodion*, 577].

(30) Holy and Great Saturday, Matins, the *Praises* [*Triodion*, 623, 624, 640].

(31) *Cat.* 3. 278–81.

(32) *Eth.* 12. 1–5.

(33) The term *ἀνάγνωσις* (reading) in patristic literature usually means 'reading Scripture', in particular reading psalms: see Lampe, *PGL*, 99.

(34) *Cat.* 26. 73, 249, 273.

(35) *Vie* 26. 19–27. 3; 27. 11–15.

(36) *Cat.* 31. 29–31.

(37) *Cat.* 4. 338–41.

(38) *Eth.* 1. 12. 1–8. One may notice the difference between Origen's interest in biblical criticism and Symeon's advice to avoid discussions concerning the 'external' meaning of the text. However, both authors would agree that the 'internal' aim of Scripture is what everybody ought to concentrate upon. Moreover, in practice Symeon very often discusses the meaning of certain biblical words and expressions, showing his attention to the 'external' meaning of the text as well.

(39) Ibid. 469–76. The term *ψευδώνυμος γνῶσις* is inherited from Paul (cf. 1 Tim. 6: 26) and was used by early Christian writers who struggled against the Gnostics. In Symeon the name which was applied in the second century to heresy, is given to 'external' (Hellenic) knowledge in general.

(40) *Eth.* 3. 1–10; 70–80.

(41) Cf. *Cap.* 2. 21.

(42) *Cat.* 24. 7–24.

(43) Ibid. 41–62.

(44) *Theol*. 1. 325. Cf. Isa. 24: 16 in Lucianic recension of the Septuagint.

(45) *Theol*. 1. 313–24.

(46) *Eth*. 15. 128–9.

(47) *Hymn* 25. 5–11.

(48) *Hymn* 18. 99–100.

(49) The statistics are borrowed from H. Turner, who derived them from the *SC* editors with a small number of additions: see *Fatherhood*, 39–42. According to the same statistics, there are several books of the Old Testament which Symeon never quotes: Ruth, 1 and 2 Ezra, the Lamentations and the Letter of Jeremiah, Obadiah, Zephaniah, Haggai.

(50) Cf. *Cat*. 15. 125; *Cat*. 22. 237–8; *Cat*. 29. 52–5.

(51) H. Turner mentions 27 references to Psalm 50/51: *Fatherhood*, 40. Let us remind ourselves that this psalm is read in the monasteries no less that four times every day: it is included in the orders of matins, the third hour, compline, and the midnight service.

(52) *Eth*. 1 and 2 are devoted to the explanation of Genesis 1–3.

(53) *Hymn* 21. 280–91.

(54) See *Eth*. 11. 670–90.

(55) *Eth*. 4. 528–636. This is not in fact the highest frequency of citation: in 25 lines of *Cat*. 20. 110–35 the editors have found 15–21 possible allusions; in 25 lines of *Cat*. 28. 69–94 more than 24 allusions; and in 27 lines of *Cat*. 28. 245–71 no less than 28 allusions.

(56) *Hymn* 29. 81–129.

(57) See Turner, *Fatherhood*, 41.

(58) Cf. Hussey, *Learning*, 210. Cf. also J. Darrouzès' summary of Symeon's method of quoting: 'Symeon gives the impression of a man who does not read a text or a phrase in its entirety: he grasps one word or image, and this is enough for his eminently poetical and imaginative spirit: in this he is sharply distinguished from many Byzantine commentators and compilers…In his citations from the Bible, it is not the thought of someone else that he seeks, but it is an echo of his inner life that he rediscovers'; *SC* 51. 33–4.

(59) *Cat*. 31. 154–5: 'thus, ascending little by little, from one step to another, as by the steps of a ladder…'

(60) Cf. *Beat*. 2 [89].

(61) *Cat*. 31. 38–50.

(62) Gregory of Nyssa, *Beat*. 1 [82 ff.]. Cf. Basil the Great, *Sh*. *Rules* 205 [1217 C].

(63) John Chrysostom, *Horn*. *Mat*. 15 [185 D–187 E]; Makarios of Egypt, *Horn*. 12. 3 [108–9].

(64) *Cat*. 31. 51–6. Symeon's concept of mourning will be discussed in Chapter 10.

(65) Gregory of Nyssa, *Beat*. 3 [101]; John Chrysostom, *Horn*. *Mat*. 15 [15C].

(66) *Beat*. 3 [103–4].

(67) Cf. for example, *Hymn* 11. 79–94, where Symeon describes the vision of light and then its deprivation, about which he should 'mourn unceasingly'.

(68) *Cat*. 31. 57–60.

(69) *Ladder* 8 [823 BC]. Cf. Origen, *Comm*. *Mat*. 81 [48].

(70) *Prayer* 270–91 [42–4].

(71) *Cat*. 31. 66–73.

(72) Gregory of Nyssa, *Beat*. 4 [122].

(73) *Cat*. 31. 74–82.

(74) Cf. Isaac, *Horn*. 81 [306] = *Syr*. *Hom*. 74 [507].

(75) Cf. Great the Basil, *Sh*. *Rules* 185 [1197 D]: 'Blessed is he who mourns for a sinner.' Cf. ibid. 194 [1212 C].

(76) Gregory of Nyssa, *Beat*. 5 [126].

(77) *Cat*. 31. 97–8.

(78) *Beat*. 6 [141]. See also the section on the vision of God as light in Chapter 10.

(79) *Love* 4. 72 [226]. Cf. Origen, *Comm*. *Mat*. 86 [50]. Note the contrast between these authors and Chrysostom, who does not perceive any mystical dimension in Matt. 5: 8 but asserts that Christ was speaking here 'of mental vision which is within our power (i.e. imagination) and also of thought about God': *Hom*. *John* 15. 1 [99].

(80) *Cat*. 31. 100–7.

(81) Cf. *Hom*. *Mat*. 15 [190 B].

(82) *Cat*. 31. 126–38.

(83) *Cat*. 31. 154–61.

(84) *Beat*. 8[170].

(85) *Cat*. 2. 1–34.

(86) *Cat*. 2. 68–70.

(87) *Cat*. 2. 232–9.

(88) *Cat*. 10. 370–405.

(89) *Cat*. 10. 441–7.

(90) *Eth*. 10. 448–65.

(91) See *Comm*. *John*, ii. 133–74 [296–325].

(92) It is interesting how he almost completely leaves aside the theme of light when commenting on John 1: 5: see *Hom*. *John* 5. 1–2 [54–5]. The contrast with Symeon is striking.

(93) See *Hom*. *John* 1. 1–1. 8 [16–96].

(94) Cf. *Rom*. 5. 12–21; Justin, *Dial*. *Triph*. 100; Irenaeus, *Her*. 3. 22. 4. Cf. also Krivochéine, *Light*, 313–14; Daniélou,

Shadows, 11–21; Planque, 'Marie', *DSp* iv, 1779–81; Graef, *Mary*, 39 ff.

(95) This symbolism derives from *Barn*. 15. 8–9 [186–8], as well as from Justin, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and other early Fathers: see Lampe, *PGL*, 935; Darrouzès, *SC* 122. 182–3; Danielou, *Bible*, 262–75.

(96) *Eth*. 1. 9. 55–64. Cf. the interpretation of the Virgin Mary as a 'bride' of Christ in 'Greek Ephrem': 'I am also Thy bride, for Thou art chaste' [*Opera* ii. 429EF]. See Graef, *Mary*, 57–8.

(97) *Eth*. 1. 10. 11–20. Cf. the same notion in Maximos the Confessor, *Prayer* 397–401 [50]; cf. also Makarios of Egypt, *Ep*. 18. 6. 12; *Ep*. 27. 1. 7. S. Brock observed a parallelism between this notion of Symeon and similar ideas of Syriac writers of 7th–8th centuries: see 'Mary', 58–9; 'Prayer', 137–8.

(98) Cf. Thayer, *Lexicon NT*, 72.

(99) *Eth*. 1. 12. 461–8.

(100) *Eth*. 1. 12. 469–89.

(101) *Eth*. 12. 1–157.

(102) *Eth*. 3. 98–122.

(103) *Eth*. 3. 123–9.

(104) *Cap*. 2. 21.

(105) *Eth*. 2. 4. 9–19. The interpretation of Noah as a type of Christ occurred in Justin, *Dial. Triph*. 138. 1–2; and then in many Church authors: see Lampe, *PGL*, 931. Noah's Ark was interpreted as a symbol of Mary by the 'Greek Ephrem' [*Opera* iii. 529 B], John of Damascus [*II Hom. Nat. M*. 7 in *PG* 99. 689 B] and John of Evboea [*Concept*. 4; 1464 B–1465 A]. Cf. also the appeal to the Mother of God in the *Canon* by Joseph the Hymnographer, Canticle Five: 'Hail, All-blameless, who hast saved the world from drowning in the flood of sin' [*Triodion*, 432].

(106) *Eth*. 9. 415–26. This is not the usual interpretation of Isaac, who is traditionally regarded as a type of Christ or the Church: see Lampe, *PGL*, 676.

(107) *Cat*. 6. 138–9; *Cap*. 1. 78. The 'Egyptian darkness' (cf. Exod. 10. 21–3) is regarded as a symbol of spiritual darkness and of wickedness by both church writers and liturgical texts. Gregory of Nyssa allegorically interprets it as 'the darkness of wickedness', to which people 'are driven by their evil pursuits': *Moses* 11. 81 [73]. Cf. Eirmos: 'Having crossed the water…and escaped from the wickedness of Egypt' [*Triodion*, 478].

(108) *Hymn* 18. 133–222; see also a scholium to *Hymn* 18. 130 in *SC* 174. 85. Cf. the saying of Abba Markellos in John Moschos, *Meadow* 152 [3021 B]: 'Let us hurry to flee from bodily life, as Israel ran from Egyptian captivity.'

(109) *Eth*. 1. 12. 104–33. The interpretation is derived from Origen: 'The"pavilion" is the bodily nature in which God is seen through the Word'; *Fragm. Ps*. 17. 12 [1221 B].

(110) *Eth*. 2. 5. 8–21. Cf. the same interpretation in the *Akathistos*, Ikos Six: 'Hail, food that takes the place of manna…Hail, promised land' [*Triodion*, 427].

(111) *Eth*. 15. 61–73. The figure of Moses has been regarded as a symbol of the true mystic since Philo, and such an interpretation has become traditional in Christian theological thought: see Malherbe and Ferguson, 'Introduction', 5–6. The image of Moses does not occupy so prominent a place in Symeon's mysticism as in Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and *Corpus Areopagiticum*; nevertheless Symeon occasionally cites Moses as an example when speaking of mystical life.

(112) *Eth*. 15. 41–52. An interesting and rare example of the trichotomy of a human being in Symeon. The interpretation itself seems to be original: cf. Veniamin, *Transfiguration*, 243–4.

(113) *Eth*. 15. 28–31. The sinful woman is a traditional example of repentance in patristic usage. Cf. Amphilochius of Iconium, *Woman* 4. 6. 170–216 [*Opera*, 114–16]. Cf. also the *Great Canon* by Andrew of Crete, Canticle Eight: 'As precious ointment, O Saviour, I empty on Thine head the alabaster box of my tears' [*Triodion*, 408].

(114) *Eth*. 15. 74–9.

(115) *Eth*. 2. 1. 44–6. Cf. the *Great Canon* by Andrew of Crete, Canticle Nine: 'Be not overcome by despair, O my soul; for thou hast heard of the faith of woman of Canaan...Cry out from the depth of thy heart...as she once cried to Christ' [*Triodion*, 413].

(116) *Eth*. 2. 1. 46–51. Cf. the similar interpretation in Gregory Nazianzen, *Poes. hist*. 12[1182 A].

(117) *Eth*. 4. 369–585.

(118) Cf. the description of the parts of the human body in *Hymn* 15. 141–74. Cf. also an interesting, though indirect, parallel from Syriac tradition: an explanation of the mystical meaning of all members of Christ's body in an anonymous treatise (of uncertain date): Graffin, 'Explication', 263–77.

(119) *Eth*. 1. 9. 21–44.

(120) *Eth*. 1. 9. 74–10. 96.

(121) This expression occurs in Origen, *Horn. Jerem*. 18. 5. 22 [156]; Gregory of Nyssa, *Moses*, ii [74], and other authors; but Symeon probably alludes to the following liturgical text: 'Seeing the sea of life which is ruffled by the gale of temptations, I hasten to your quiet harbour' [*Eirmologion*, 161].

(122) *Hymn* 19. 107–27.

(123) Cf. the *Canon of Pascha* by John of Damascus, Ode Three: 'Come, let us drink a new drink, not one marvellously brought forth from a barren rock, but the Source of incorruption, which springeth forth from the grave of Christ...' [*Pentecostarion*, 29].

(124) Cf. the Theotokion from the *Canon* by Theodore the Studite: 'In days of old Moses saw thy mystery prefigured in the Bush, O hallowed Virgin: just as the flame did not consume it, so the fire of the Godhead has not consumed Thy womb' [*Triodion*, 339]. The interpretation is derived from Gregory of Nyssa, *Moses*, ii [39].

(125) Cf. the *Canon of Pascha* by John of Damascus, Ode One: 'pascha, the Lord's Pascha; for Christ God hath brought us from death unto life, and from earth unto Heaven as we sing the triumphal hymn' [*Pentecostarion*, 28]. The genre of canon assumes nine odes, the first of which is traditionally devoted to the crossing of the Red Sea.

(126) See Lundberg, *Typologie*, 116–45; Daniélou, *Bible*, 86–98.

(127) Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Moses*, ii [75].

(128) Cf. *Akathistos Hymnos*, Ikos Six: 'Hail, rock that gives drink to all who thirst for life...Hail, food that takes the place of manna...Hail, promised land. Hail, source of milk and honey' [*Triodion*, 426–7].

(129) Gregory of Nyssa, following Origen, gives the third interpretation of the manna, which is understood by him as the Word of God: 'This bread, then, that does not come from the earth is the Word', *Moses*, ii [77] Cf. Daniélou, *Bible*, 148–51.

(130) Cf. the *Canon to the Theotokos* by Joseph the Hymnographer, Ode Seven: 'Hail...mystical staff that has blossomed with the unfading flower' [*Triodion*, 437].

(131) Cf. the *Canon to the Holy Cross*, Ode Three, Eirmos: 'The rod of Aaron is an image of this mystery [of the Cross]...' [*Menaion*, 145].

(132) *Hymn* 19. 121–9.

(133) Cf. the patristic doctrine of Christ's 'impassible passion': Origen, *Comm. Mat.* 10. 23 [33]; Methodios, *Porphyr.* 2 [505]; Cyril of Alexandria, *Ep.* 4. 45 [48 A].

(134) *Hymn* 19. 140–6.

(135) *Cat.* 20. 78–145.

(136) *Hymn* 11. 1–77.

(137) *Hymn* 18. 106.

(138) *Hymn* 51. 67–113.

(139) *Hymn* 51. 114–35.

(140) Symeon referred to this saint several times: cf. Chapter 5 of this study.

(141) *L. Mary Egypt.* 31 [3717 D–3720 A].

(142) Rufinus, *Hist. Mon.* Ix. 2. 7 [313].

(143) *Cap.* 3. 100.

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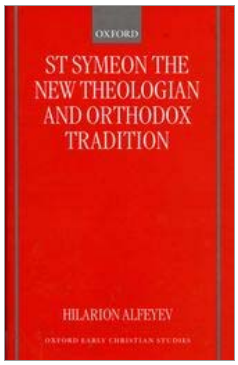

St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition
Hilarion Alfeyev

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Symeon and Divine Worship

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Hilarion Alfeyev

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Abstract and Keywords

Divine worship occupies a very important place in the life of a monk, who usually spends many hours a day in church. Symeon the New Theologian, who lived all the time in cenobitic monasteries, must have attended church offices every day during about fifty years of his monastic life. An analysis of his background would be incomplete without pointing out the enormous role of church worship in his life and spirituality. This chapter examines Symeon's attitude to three main dimensions of the Orthodox liturgical tradition: daily monastic office, the Eucharist, and the annual cycle of feasts. The basic principles and elements of the monastic office in Orthodox tradition are also discussed, and especially in Constantinopolitan monasteries of the time of Symeon. The question of frequency of Communion and liturgy in Eastern monasteries are considered in connection with Symeon's eucharistic approach. This chapter looks at the basic principles and elements of divine worship in early monasticism, the monastic office in Constantinople around the time of Symeon, and Simeon's eucharistic piety.

Keywords: Symeon the New Theologian, divine worship, Eucharist, feasts, monastic office, Orthodox tradition, Communion, liturgy, monasticism, piety

Divine worship occupies a very important place in the life of a monk, who usually spends many hours a day in church. Symeon, who lived all the time in cenobitic monasteries, must have attended church offices every day during about fifty years of his monastic life.[1] An analysis of his background would be incomplete without pointing out the enormous role of church worship in his life and spirituality. In this chapter Symeon's attitude to three main dimensions of the Orthodox liturgical tradition will be examined: I. daily monastic office; 2. the Eucharist, and 3. the annual cycle of feasts. The basic principles and elements of the monastic office in Orthodox tradition will also be

discussed, and especially in Constantinopolitan monasteries of the time of Symeon. The question of frequency of Communion in Eastern monasteries will be examined in connection with Symeon's eucharistic approach.

1. Basic Principles and Elements of Divine Worship in Early Monasticism

Since the beginning of monasticism, the injunction of Paul to 'pray without ceasing' (1 Thess. 5:17) has been understood literally; and the everyday routine of monks was organized in accordance with these words. It consists of hours which a monk spends in church attending offices, of individual prayer in the cell, and of 'bodily labour' during which a monk should not interrupt inner prayer at all.[2] The biblical expression 'to walk with God' (in the Septuagint, 'before God', 'in front of God': Gen. 5: 22; 6: 9) has been interpreted to mean that the monk should live a life which is entirely 'oriented' to God, that is, which includes unceasing remembrance of God accompanied by the fulfilment of His commandments.

(p. 74) This initial ideal was put into practice in a different way in the three main types of early monasticism: eremitical, scetiot, and cenobitic.[3] Hermits did not visit church very often: sometimes they did not leave their cells for years; so the church office was almost completely abandoned in favour of individual prayer in cells. Scetiot monks attended church offices once or twice a week. In cenobitic monasteries church offices were the sole basis of everyday prayer and were completed, but never replaced, by the prayer in cells.

Among cenobitic monasteries of the fourth century there was also a difference in the numbers of offices and their structure. Egyptian monastic sources tell us of two main daily offices: one at cockcrow, and one in the evening; both included twelve psalms.[4] Outside Egypt, especially in urban monasteries, monks adopted some elements of cathedral matins and vespers, and introduced the offices of the 'hours' and compline.[5] Palestinian and Antiochene sources mention seven offices: nocturnal psalmody at cockcrow and morning prayer at sunrise, offices of the third, sixth, and ninth hours, and then vespers and psalms before retiring.[6] Basil the Great in the instructions to Cappadocian monks expresses the wish to have seven offices a day, interpreting literally Psalm 118/119: 164:

> Let the whole of life be a time for prayer. However, as it is necessary to interrupt intensive psalmody and kneeling with some breaks, let us follow those hours which as a model are given to us by saints...And since David says: 'Seven times a day do I praise Thee because of Thy righteous judgements'...we must have this rule and seven times a day praise God.[7]

This recommendation actually corresponds to the practice which had already been adopted in Cappadocian monastic communities by the time of Basil and was later grounded on a special theory.[8]

(p. 75) The Psalter was a basic text for Christian worship, and the selection of psalms was taken as a principle of each office in the cathedral rite (i.e. certain psalms were chosen for matins, vespers, the hours, and other offices). In the monastic rite this principle coexisted with the practice of weekly reading of the whole of the Psalter. There are several fourth- and fifth-century authors who provide evidence concerning the monastic office in the Christian East. Basil describes the all-night vigil in Cappadocian monasteries as a succession of psalms sung antiphonally and of those sung by one monk with the rest responding.[9] John Chrysostom describes monks who sing 'all with one voice, having made one choir'.[10] John Cassian speaks of the alternation of psalmody with silent prayer during the office of twelve psalms.[11] Thus, singing either antiphonally or in unison, recitation by one voice with the response of the others, and silent prayer were the main elements of the monastic rite.[12]

Though several Christian hymns were included in the monastic office, early monks were not usually in favour of developed hymnography and preferred psalms to any other kind of singing. There was even an opposition, especially in eremitical monasticism, to the hymnography of the cathedral rite. An Egyptian hermit Pamvo, when asked why he did not sing *troparia* and *canons*,[13] as in Alexandrian parishes, answered ironically: 'The monks did not emigrate into the desert in order to perform before God, and to give themselves airs, and to sing songs, and to compose tunes, and to shake their hands and move from one foot to the other.'[14]

(p. 76) 2. The Monastic Office in Constantinople around the Time of Symeon

The development of the urban monastic office was always under the influence of the cathedral rite, but this influence was especially strong in Constantinople. Here monastic offices included a number of texts and customs taken from the rite of the Great Church (St. Sophia), the main cathedral of the Byzantine world. This rite was distinguished by

magnificence and splendour because of the presence of the Emperor and Patriarch in the cathedral services.[15] The direct influence of the cathedral rite on the office of the Studite monastery in Constantinople is testified by several remarks in the Studite *Hypotyposis* (*Υποτύπωστς*), which derives from Theodore the Studite,[16] where the author prescribes replacing ordinary parts of the monastic office by 'those traditional in the Great Church'.[17]

Another factor which had much greater influence on the development of the monastic office in Constantinople was the blossoming of monastic hymnography in the sixth to ninth centuries, connected with the names of Romanos the Melodist, Andrew of Crete, John of Damascus, Kosmas of Maiuma, Theodore the Studite, and other famous hymnographers.[18] Their poetic compositions were included in the office of the Studite and other Constantinopolitan monasteries, side by side with psalms, scriptural and hagiographic readings, and ancient Christian hymns.

Therefore, the liturgical tradition of the monasteries in Constantinople combined the legacy of early monastic worship, the customs of the cathedral rite, and the legacy of famous hymnographers, **(p. 77)** among whom there were many Studite monks.[19] The basic structure of daily office as prescribed by the Studite *τνπικα*, is similar to that of the Great Church:[20]

GREAT CHURCH	STUDITE TYPIKON
EVENING OFFICE	
Psalm 140/141 with *troparion*	Psalm 140/141 with *stichira*[21]
Entrance of the Patriarch	(Entrance and) 'O joyful Light'
Prokeimenon[22]	*Prokeimenon*
	'Vouchsafe, O Lord'
Three short antiphons	*Stichira*
	The song of Symeon (Luke 2: 29–32)
Troparion (three times)	*Troparion*
Dismissal	Dismissal
MORNING OFFICE	
Nocturnal psalms[23]	Six psalms[24]
Antiphons and entrance (if feast)	Hymn 'The Lord is God'
Troparion (if feast)	*Troparia*
	Kathismata[25] and readings[26]
Psalm 50/51 with refrain	Psalm 50/51
	Canons and readings[27]
Psalms 148–50	*Psalms* 148–50 with *stichira*
Doxology and *Trisagion*	Doxology and *Trisagion*
Litanies	*Troparia* (and litanies)
Dismissal	Dismissal

(p. 78) The difference between the two orders lies in use of the *kathismata*, readings, *stichira*, and *canons*, which are included in the Studite offices and replace more ancient elements, such as antiphons and *troparia*.

The sequence of offices and the time for them in Constantinopolitan monasteries corresponded to the idea of the Septenary, including the midnight office (*μεσονυκτικόν*, or *παννυχίς*),[28] matins with the first hour, the third, sixth, and ninth hours, vespers, and compline. One can compare indications in the liturgical documents of the Studite tradition with the remarks of Nikitas Stithatos in his 'Life of Symeon' and of Symeon himself in his 'Discourses' concerning the divine offices. When writing about Symeon's life in the monastery of St. Mamas, Nikitas testifies that 'on Sundays and on the great feasts his cell saw how he remained without sleeping from the evening till morning';[29] this evidence confirms the absence of vigils in the monastery even on great feasts. On weekdays Symeon rose 'at the

seventh hour after midnight' (about I a.m.) and went to church for the singing of 'morning hymns' (*ἑωθινοὶ ὕμνοι*); then he attended matins (*ὄρθρος*).[30] Presumably, *μεσονυκτικόν* is signified by the term 'morning hymns'; it might have been followed by matins either after a break or without it (which is not clear from Nikitas' description). After the end of matins there was quite a long break: Symeon could spend some time in his cell, then sit outside,[31] then return to the cell and read Scripture, then read the lives of saints, and then 'copy divinely inspired books'.[32] Then the divine Liturgy (*ἡ θεία ἀναφορά*) followed.[33] The evening service is also mentioned by Nikitas (though indirectly).[34]

(p. 79) In Symeon's writings we find references to matins (*ὄρθρος*) with the 'six psalms' (*ἑξάψαλμος*), 'stichology' (*ατιχολογὶα*), 'readings' (*ἀναγνώσεις*), and final '*troparion*'.[35] Symeon does not allude to the third and sixth hours as separate services,[36] but mentions a break between matins and the Liturgy.[37] He also mentions vespers (*λυχνικόν*)[38] and compline ('evening prayers').[39] As to the midnight office, Symeon presumably alludes to it when mentioning *ἄμωμοι* ('undefiled'), that is, Psalm 118/119, which was a component of the midnight office:[40] however, Symeon recommends that it be read in the cell, so we must conclude that *μεσονυκτικόν* was recited at St. Mamas privately.[41] Allusion to private prayer in the cell before matins[42] confirms this supposition. It does not correspond to Nikitas' indication that the *μεσονυκτικόν* was recited in the church, but one tends to suppose that the latter is not as precise as Symeon in describing what happened more than seventy years before the time of writing.

3. Symeon and the Daily Office

Symeon regards the daily office as a school of prayer and spiritual life. He emphasizes the importance of attentive listening to every word of the church office. When giving instructions to beginners in *Cat*. 26, Symeon writes:

> [A monk] must rise at midnight before matins and recite the prescribed prayer, and after doing so he must rise with all to go to the office of praise [*δοξολογία*], and with concentration and vigilance go through the whole **(p. 80)** office, paying particular attention to the beginning of the hymnody, that is, the six psalms, stichology and readings, with diligence, without relaxation of body or putting one foot in front of another, or leaning on walls and pillars, but holding his hands securely together, the feet equally on the ground and the head immobile, without nodding here and there. The mind must not wander off...The eye and the soul must be kept free from distraction and pay attention to nothing else but the psalmody and the reading, and to the meaning of the words of the divine Scripture that are being sung and read, so that no one of these words may pass in vain, but rather that his soul may derive nourishment from all of them and attain to compunction and humility and divine illumination...[43]

Several components in this passage can be distinguished. First of all, Symeon prescribes a discipline of the body, which corresponds to a discipline of the mind: one cannot be concentrated if one's body is relaxed. It may seem surprising to find such detailed practical instructions concerning the attitude of the body, the position of the feet and hands, in such a mystical writer as Symeon. But for Symeon there are no aspects of minor importance, if it is a question of one's attitude to God. It is interesting to mention that in early monastic texts we find only isolated instructions concerning the position of the body during prayer, while the later Hesychasts, including Symeon and those who lived after him, paid more attention to this aspect and devoted special passages to it.[44]

Secondly, Symeon speaks of the disciplining of the mind during prayer. This is quite a traditional theme for ascetical writers. John Klimakos says that 'the beginning of prayer consists in banishing by a single thought (*μονολογίστως*) the thoughts that assault us at the very moment that they appear (*ἐκ προοιμίων αὐτῶν*); the middle stage consists in confining our minds to what is being said and thought: and the perfection [of prayer] is rapture in the Lord.'[45] Symeon knows by experience that there is a direct connection between concentration of the mind during the church office and its ability to attain to the mystical 'rapture in the Lord'.

Then, Symeon points out the aim of this attentive listening to the words of the office: to attain compunction, humility, and divine illumination.[46] We can see a similarity between the words of Symeon and a passage from Theodore the Studite, where the latter speaks of **(p. 81)** the necessity of 'attentive listening to psalmody and the diligent following of the readings' and then emphasizes that its aim is 'to be seen pure by the Pure, so as to be illuminated and not darkened'.[47]

Symeon also says something which he inherited from another Studite, Symeon the Pious:

> If possible, let none of you go through the office and the reading without tears...If you force yourself so that you do not go through the prescribed church office without tears, you will acquire this excellent habit. And during the stichology and troparia which you sing, your soul is fed, receiving divine thoughts from this singing into itself, and through that which is recited your mind is carried up to spiritual reality; and when weeping sweet tears, you are in the church as if you were in heaven with the higher Powers.[48]

Symeon the Pious in his 'Ascetical Discourse' tells the monk to pray with tears[49] and 'not to receive Communion without tears'.[50] The following recommendation by him directly corresponds to what Symeon says about attendance at offices:

> When attending office...do not cease to weep warmly with contrition, not saying anything to those who are scandalized about it or laugh at it...For novices it is very good to weep, especially during the six psalms, the stichology, the readings and the Holy Liturgy.[51]

Prayer with tears in general was recommended by many ascetical writers, but usually they had in mind prayer in the cell.[52] Symeon the Pious extends this recommendation to church offices, and Symeon the New Theologian follows his advice. It is noteworthy that Symeon the New Theologian regards 'the *stichology* and *troparia* as means for acquiring tears and contrition. There is a clear contrast between Symeon's point of view and that which was characteristic of early monasticism with its neglect of developed hymnography, where 'the *troparia* and *canons*' could have been regarded even as an obstacle to acquiring contrition.

However, to become able to weep during offices, attendance at the offices and listening to the *troparia* is not enough. If one wants to **(p. 82)** reach true contrition, one must put into practice everything one hears in church:

> Practise what you daily sing and read, and then you will be able to achieve this...If you carry out in practice what you day by day sing and read or hear others read, without omission, with your whole heart...the divine and unspeakable gift will come on you not only in the evening and in the morning and at noon [Ps. 54/55: 18], but even when you eat and drink, and often during your conversation, and when you sing and read and pray, and lie down on your bed.[53]

We have already met the idea of fulfilling what is read when we analysed Symeon's attitude to Scripture; we can see now that he consistently returns to this theme, which is traditional among ascetical writers.

There are several other practical prescriptions concerning attendance at offices in Symeon's 'Catechetical Discourses'. In particular, Symeon prescribes not leaving the church before final dismissal.[54] He also speaks of the behaviour of the *canonarch* (reader) in the church office: if one is appointed to recite hymns during the office, one must do it 'without negligence and carelessness, but attentively and soberly', as in the presence of Christ Himself.[55]

In *Cat*. 30 Symeon provides recommendations similar to *Cat*. 26, including attending church offices with concentration and contrition, but mentions one additional detail, that is, that when listening to psalms, one must 'remember also prayer in the cell'.[56] One may presume that Symeon alludes here to the practice of unceasing prayer with the repetition in the mind of a short formula, such as *Κύριε ἐλέησον* ('Lord, have mercy'). As B. Krivocheine noticed, Symeon in his authentic writings never speaks of the traditional Jesus prayer in its full form ('Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me'), preferring shorter forms of it; however, he does speak of what in ascetical tradition is called *κρυπτὴ μελέτη* ('secret occupation'), or *κρυπτὴ ἐργασία* ('secret practice').[57] This secret repetition of a short prayer in the mind has as its aim unceasing remembrance of God; it is usually recommended that this be done between church offices, in order not to lose concentration of the mind and not to forget about **(p. 83)** God's presence. Symeon encourages the remembering of this prayer during offices, simultaneously with attentive listening to the words of psalms and hymns.

Important as the church worship was for Symeon, he states that unceasing prayer is much more important:

> The one who prays unceasingly includes everything in this; he need not praise God seven times a day [Ps. 118/119: 164], or in the evening, and the morning and at noon [Ps. 54/55: 17], as he has already fulfilled everything of what we pray and sing at the prescribed times.[58]

The monastic ideal of 'walking with God', which is the full dedication of one's whole life to God, is again emphasized in this statement: as with the reading of Scripture, so with attendance at church offices, everything, after all, is only a means of achieving it.

4. Liturgy and Communion: the Question of Frequency

In monasteries in the fourth and fifth centuries the Holy Liturgy was not usually celebrated every day. In the *Pachomian koinonia*, for example, it was celebrated twice a week: on Saturday evening and on Sunday before noon.[59] There is no clear evidence how often Anthony the Great and his monks received Communion: it is supposed that they partook every time that an occasion or possibility allowed them to do so, and so not regularly.[60] In the early seventh century the monastic practice of receiving Holy Communion every Sunday was common: in the 'Spiritual Meadow' references to such a practice are constant.[61]

However, side by side with a diversity of practice, there also existed the idea of daily Communion: it occurs quite often in both early Eastern and early Western sources. The words from the Lord's prayer 'Give us this day our daily bread' (Matt. 6: 11) were often interpreted as an indication of the daily reception of the Holy Eucharist.[62] Basil the Great says that 'it is good and useful to partake **(p. 84)** every day', though in Cappadocia they usually partake four times a week.[63] Augustine speaks of daily (*quotidie*) Communion.[64] In Ruflnus' *Historia monachorum* there is a description of the small monastic community of Abba Apollonios in Egypt, where all the monks received Holy Communion every day before the meal, around the ninth hour (3 p.m.).[65]

How often was the Liturgy celebrated in Constantinopolitan monasteries in the time of Symeon, and how frequently did the monks receive Holy Communion? As far as we may conclude from Symeon's 'Life' and writings, the Liturgy was celebrated in both the Studite and the St. Mamas monasteries several times per week. We cannot say exactly when the frequent celebration of the Liturgy was introduced in Studite practice, but from the time of Theodore the Studite it became traditional.[66]

As for Holy Communion, it is not clear how frequently the monks partook of it in the time of Symeon. Holy Communion was an important component of Theodore's spirituality. He partook every day and recommended frequent Communion to others.[67] In his disciplinary rules Theodore mentions Communion several times. One of his rules prescribes an *epitimia* (penalty) on those who 'do not partake on the day of the Liturgy'.[68] Another rule provides a short penance for those who reject Communion by their own choice.[69] Once Theodore mentions those who do not partake for more than forty days without good reason.[70] One piece of evidence is of particular importance. Complaining about the careless attitude of the monks towards Communion, Theodore says: 'On Sunday there are some partakers; but if the Liturgy is celebrated on a weekday, nobody approaches. Formerly, in the monastery, those who so wished, partook every day, but now it happens very rarely, or rather, you cannot find this anywhere.'[71] Theodore's writings show that he encouraged frequent Communion and that there once existed, among some monks, the practice of daily Communion, which he could remember; however, in his time there were also monks who partook quite rarely.

As to the rhythm of the celebration of Liturgy, the very fact that **(p. 85)** Theodore celebrated it every day does not necessarily mean that this practice became a norm after his death. In the Studite disciplinary rules non–liturgical days are mentioned side by side with liturgical ones.[72] In the Studite *Hypotyposis* we find references to the practice of the reception of the *εὐλογία* instead of Communion:[73] the office known under the name *τυπικά* and recited usually before Communion, is prescribed there to be recited before the reception of the *ἀντίδωρον*.[74] The *Diatyposis* of Athanasios the Athonite repeats this prescription.[75] This may well imply that the daily celebration of the Liturgy was not common in the Studite monastery in the eighth and ninth centuries.

Even in the eleventh century neither the daily Liturgy nor daily Communion was a norm.[76] There is an interesting example in the case of Symeon's younger contemporary, Paul of Evergetis, who was the hegumen of the monastery of the Holy Virgin 'Evergetidos' in Constantinople between 1048 and 1054. He was a strong defender of the practice of daily Communion: in his florilegium of patristic texts named *Evergetinos* he provides a collection of passages to confirm this practice.[77] We do not know whether Paul introduced this practice in his monastery, and if so, whether he was successful. In the *Typikon* of the monastery 'Evergetidos' written by Paul's successor Timotheos we find contradictory evidence concerning the frequency of reception of Communion. For example, we find the following recommendation:

> It is essential to know that other monasteries which follow the Rule of the famous Studite monastery do not sing the *τυπικὰ* in the Liturgies; they sing **(p. 86)** it after the dismissal of None, so that they may receive antidoron. But we, since we partake of the divine mysteries almost every day, decided to sing the *τυπικά* in cells.[78]

This may imply that, although in other monasteries the practice of daily Liturgy and Communion was not established, in Paul's own monastery they partook, and possibly celebrated the Liturgy, every day.

On the other hand, in the same *Typikon* we find a direct prohibition of partaking daily: It is not allowed for us...to partake every day...We would like to do this, but because of human infirmity and the difficulty of this, do not allow it'. The author, however, permits the monks to partake three times or once a week.[79] When reading the *Typikon*, one receives the impression that Paul's initial idea of daily Communion was reflected in it, but perhaps his successors tried to correct this idea in accordance with the existing practice.

Another noteworthy detail is that in the epoch in question monks did not partake at every Liturgy, whether it was celebrated daily or not. It is well known that in the early Church everyone present at the celebration of the Eucharist was expected to partake; otherwise he was required to leave the church together with the catechumens. Paul of Evergetis refers to this rule in the title of one of the chapters of his anthology; however, he cannot provide any Eastern source in confirmation of it but only quotations from Gregory the Great.[80] It seems, he is again trying to restore the tradition which had already been forgotten by his time. As A. Schmemann shows, in the period of the formation of the Byzantine liturgical synthesis (seventh to tenth centuries) the rhythm of reception of Communion did not coincide with the rhythm of celebration of the Eucharist.[81] How often to partake did not depend any longer on the frequency of the Eucharist, as it did in the early Church, but on the individual piety of each believer. Even in the monasteries where the Eucharist was celebrated daily not everyone received Communion at each Liturgy. In the same period the Liturgy lost its character of being an exceptional, festal office, of the celebration of the 'eighth day', and was inserted into the daily monastic routine. A. Schmemann associates all **(p. 87)** these processes with a general decline of eucharistic piety in the epoch we are speaking of.[82]

Such was the eucharistic practice in Constantinopolitan monasteries when Symeon preached his teaching on the Eucharist and tried to put it into practice. Symeon was a supporter of daily Liturgy and Communion as a general principle. As mentioned, he received Holy Communion every day from the very beginning of his monastic life, and after being ordained he celebrated the Liturgy daily. In this he followed the Studite tradition, and particularly the example of Theodore. In Symeon's writings we find references to daily Communion. The Church cannot live 'without being fed every day (*καθ' ἑκάστην*) by the supersubstantial bread', Symeon says,[83] reproducing the interpretation of *ὁ ἄρτος ἐπιούσιος* (Matt. *6*: n) as 'supersubstantial' bread, which gives life to the substance of people. 'Blessed are those who are nourished with Christ every day,' he writes.[84] He speaks of 'the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which we see and eat and drink every day'.[85]

However, we do not find in Symeon the direct recommendation to partake daily, or a clear answer to the question of how often one should partake. It seems that Symeon permitted attendance at the Liturgy without Communion and he did not call for the restoration of the ancient practice of partaking at each Liturgy, as Paul of Evergetis did. After giving instructions to novices how to attend the Liturgy, Symeon writes in conclusion: '...If you are worthy and allowed, approach with fear and joy to partake of the ineffable gifts.'[86] To be allowed means to receive permission from one's spiritual father; to be worthy means to partake with the awareness that one is receiving God,[87] as well as with contrition and tears. If one is perfect, one may partake daily, Symeon states, quoting the exclamation from the Liturgy:

> 'The holy things for the holy!'...He who does not daily bring forth the secrets of his heart, he who does not display worthy penitence for them...he who does not always mourn...he is not worthy. But he who practises all these things and spends his whole life with groanings and tears is most worthy, not only on a feast day, but every day. If I dare say so, he is worthy from the very beginning of his repentance and conversion to partake [daily] of these divine mysteries.[88]

(p. 88) But if one has not yet reached this condition, one would do better to partake rarely, or even to abstain completely from Holy Communion:

> You should abstain from the divine and awesome gifts...until you acquire within yourself an absolutely firm attitude concerning the evil deeds of sin...When you see that you have arrived at such a state, then approach...to partake not of mere bread and wine but of the body and blood of God Himself.[89]

We see that Symeon's view on the frequency of Communion coincides generally with that of Theodore the Studite: daily Communion is possible as an ideal, but it cannot be recommended to each believer; the most important thing is to be worthy. However, the same conception is expressed by Symeon in a much more extreme way than by Theodore. In fact, Symeon says nothing else but: if you became a saint through repentance, you may partake daily; if not, do not partake at all until you are a saint. Such maximalism in the expression of his ideas is always characteristic of Symeon: we must presume that the way that Symeon expressed himself very often misled some of his listeners, who were not able to recognize traditional conceptions in such categorical statements and became his opponents.

5. Aspects of Symeon's Eucharistic Piety

Symeon's teaching on the Eucharist has already been subject to a thorough investigation on the part of several scholars, among whom B. Krivochéine must be mentioned.[90] Since we are interested in the connection between Symeon and tradition, only some basic points in his understanding of the Liturgy and Communion will be picked out and compared with corresponding points in the teaching of his predecessors.

The first point that should be dwelled upon is Symeon's statement that, when receiving Holy Communion, one must see God with one's spiritual eyes and feel His living presence in the consecrated gifts. This is what Symeon understands by participation 'with contemplation and consciousness [*μετὰ θεωρίας καὶ γνώσεως*]'.[91] In other **(p. 89)** words, Symeon insists that Holy Communion must be accompanied by mystical experience:

> If it is done with perception and understanding [*ἐν αἰσθήσει καὶ γνώσει*], then you partake worthily; if not, you eat and drink in a totally unworthy manner. If you partake in pure contemplation [*ἐν θεωρίᾳ καθαρᾷ*] of what you have taken, then you have truly become worthy of such a table. But if you are not worthy, you will not be joined to or united with God in any way. Let those who partake unworthily of the divine mysteries not imagine that they are automatically joined to or united with the invisible God.[92]

There is nothing unusual in the idea of Communion with discernment; it derives from Paul: 'Let a man examine himself...For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body' (1 Cor. 11: 28–9). The peculiar thing is that Symeon makes 'pure contemplation' into a criterion of being worthy. In fact, he recognizes only that Communion which is accompanied by mystical experience. Those who partake without mystical contemplation nourish only their body and not their soul at all.[93] How do you think, Symeon asks, that you have partaken of eternal life, if you do not feel that you have begun to live a heavenly life, that you have received bread both all-illuminating and as flaming fire? The light shines on you, but you are blind; the flame gives out its warmth on you, but you are cold. 'Partaking in this manner...you remain without Communion, without eating, and you have received nothing into yourself.'[94] Developing this concept, Symeon arrives at this radical statement:

> When we eat of it and have in ourselves no more fruit than from eating corporeal food, without gaining an awareness of another life, we have received merely bread, and not God as well.[95]

Such a statement may seem rather exceptional for patristic literature. There are, however, some parallels. In particular, Gregory of Nyssa, when speaking of Baptism, suggests that, if one has received this sacrament in infancy but in later life did not show any change to good, it was only water by which one was washed:

> It may be a bold thing to say, yet I will say it without shrinking: in such cases the water remains water, since the gift of the Holy Spirit is nowhere manifested in what has taken place.[96]

(p. 90) For both Gregory of Nyssa and Symeon the reception of the sacrament, either Eucharist or Baptism, presupposes that the Holy Spirit should be 'manifested' in the one who has partaken of it. If this manifestation does not follow the sacrament, it was received without profit: the water remained water and the bread remained bread.[97]

One may deduce that for Symeon, the reality of the sacrament depends not on the sacrament itself, but on the spiritual condition of the one who receives it. Such an apparently protestant understanding of the sacrament would

have been a logical conclusion from Symeon's words; but, as J. Darrouzès remarks, 'the theology of Symeon is not a logical system'.[98] Of course, Symeon does not press his idea to its ultimate conclusion; or rather, he is not dealing with the validity of the sacrament, which he never questioned.[99] As in Gregory of Nyssa, the question in Symeon is about the condition of the partaker: the bread remains bread for him who partook of it unworthily. It is true, however, that when insisting upon the empirical nature of the union with God in the Eucharist, Symeon leaves aside the objective aspect of the sacrament.[100] This is why Symeon's teaching on the Eucharist might have caused perplexity on the part of his adversaries.

Another point in Symeon's eucharistic piety which provoked criticism was his assertion that Communion must always be accompanied by tears. As was mentioned above, this concept was borrowed by Symeon from his spiritual father; at the same time he gained it from his personal experience.[101] What he refuses to admit is that this experience is somehow exceptional. In *Cat.* 4 he describes how once, when he mentioned to a group of monks and laymen his spiritual father's maxim 'never receive Communion without tears', the listeners said with ironic half-smiles: 'Well then, we shall never **(p. 91)** receive Communion again, and we shall all remain deprived of it.'[102] Shocked by such a reaction, Symeon develops his doctrine that everyone who wants to reach true contrition can easily acquire it through the fulfilment of God's commandments (see the passage from *Cat.* 4 which was quoted above).

Actually, the reaction of Symeon's listeners seems rather natural if we remember that in ascetical tradition tears in prayer are regarded as a gift from God.[103] 'Not many have the gift of tears,' according to the text ascribed to Athanasios of Alexandria.[104] Anastasios of Sinai suggests that some people are more liable to tears than others, though everybody can receive the gift of tears through humility.[105] John Klimakos also admits that tears may not be given to some people.[106] One may have tears, but another one may have not; the latter must mourn about not having tears.[107] Klimakos also states that God 'takes into consideration the strength of our nature': there are people who 'shed small tear-drops with difficulty, like drops of blood', and there are others who 'without difficulty pour out fountains of tears'.[108]

Symeon also speaks of the 'divine gift' of tears.[109] However, unlike John Klimakos, he insists that the ability to mourn does not depend on the quality of one's nature, but only on one's good will: 'Tears are a gift of God imparted to all those who show such good will through their actions. If we are unable to weep, it is our own fault'.[110] So those who partake without tears must blame themselves, for if they wanted to have them, they could have fulfilled all God's commandments and received the gift of mourning and compunction. What other Fathers put as an ideal, Symeon regards as a norm.

The next point that should be mentioned is the description of the Eucharist in terms of light and fire, occurring frequently in Symeon. Such symbolism, especially that of fire, is traditional in the eucharistic piety of the Eastern Church as reflected in both the Fathers and liturgical texts. Symeon the Metaphrastis, the older contemporary of our Symeon, in his prayers before Communion stresses the theme of **(p. 92)** fire which burns sinners and purifies sin.[111] In the 'Canon for Holy Communion' we read: 'Let Thy body and precious blood be for me like light and like fire, consuming sinful material, burning up the thorn of passions, and enlightening me completely to venerate Thy Divinity.'[112]

Using traditional symbolism, Symeon develops his eucharistic doctrine in his characteristically mystical way:

> Let the living bread...that comes down from heaven and brings life to the world...be your inexhaustible food and drink. As for wine, it is...wine in appearance and in spirit, the blood of Christ: light inexpressible, sweetness unspeakable, joy eternal.[113]
>
> [Through Holy Communion] You make me light, who before was darkened...You illumine me with the radiance of immortality. I am amazed, and I burn inwardly with the desire to adore You.[114]
>
> The light is Jesus Christ, the Saviour and King of the universe. The bread of His sinless flesh is light; the cup of His precious blood is light.[115]

The stress is placed on mystical illumination by the divine light through Communion. The motif of the fire which

burns sinners does not occupy here such an important place as in Symeon the Metaphrastis, for whom the theme of fire is a leitmotiv.

There is a further aspect of Symeon's eucharistic approach which also has its roots in patristic tradition: his understanding of the Eucharist in the context of the teaching concerning deification (*θέωσις*) common to all the Eastern Fathers.[116] Symeon understands Holy Communion to be the total union of man with Christ, which leads to the transfiguration and deification of man:

> Purified by repentance
> And by floods of tears,
> Partaking of the divinized body,
> As of God Himself,
> I myself become a god
> By this unspeakable union.[117]

(p. 93) Symeon then describes the union of the two parts of the human being, that is, soul and body, with the two natures of Christ.[118] It is an entire incorporation of the human being into the body of Christ.[119]?

In the Eucharist, Symeon continues, we are united with Christ in the same way as He is united with His Father.[120] Through Holy Communion we become sons of the Heavenly Father and brothers of Christ.[121] The Son of God, Who received human flesh from us, gives us instead of it His divinity through the Communion of His divinized flesh; by this 'exchange' we become His relatives (*σνγω ̂γενεῖς*).[122] Through Holy Communion the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word of God takes place in every Christian:

> This mystery not only happened...once upon a time, but it has also happened in each one of the saints of old, and it happens always up to the present time. When receiving the Spirit of our Lord and God, we become participants of His divinity and essence; and when eating His immaculate flesh, I mean the divine mysteries, we become entirely of the same body as He (*σύσσωμοι αὐτοῦ*)[123] and His relatives.[124]

Not only the soul but also the body of man becomes enlightened and transfigured through this union with God; and we become entirely like our Lord, having been made new from old, and having risen from the dead.[125]

We find an interesting parallel to Symeon's teaching of man's entire union with Christ in the Eucharist in Ephrem the Syrian, who expresses similar ideas with the same realism:

> In a new way His body
> has been fused with our bodies,
> And His pure blood
> has been poured into our veins...
> The whole of Him with the whole of us
> is fused by His mercy.[126]

(p. 94) Among the Greek Fathers, the corresponding teaching on the union of man with God through the reception of Communion was expressed by Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, and Cyril of Alexandria, to mention only these three authors. The first speaks of the union as follows: 'Partake of the body and blood of Christ in order to become of the same body (*σύσσωμος*) and of the same blood (*σύνσιμος*) with Him. In such a manner we become bearers of Christ (*χριστοφόροι*), when His body and blood are given to our members.'[127] The second describes our participation in Christ in realistic colours: 'Christ mixed Himself with us and dissolved His body in us, so that we form something single, like the body connected with the head...Those who want not only to see Him, but to take Him in their hands, He allowed to eat Him, to set their teeth upon His flesh and most intimately unite themselves with Him'.[128] Through this union a man becomes a relative (*σνγγενὴς*) of Christ.[129] The doctrine of our incorporation into Christ's body is also expressed by Chrysostom: when partaking of the body of Christ, we become not many bodies, but one body.[130] Cyril of Alexandria dwells upon the same subject, using the same terminology: he speaks of man's 'natural participation' in[131] and 'natural union' with God;[132] as well as of our being of the same body (*σύσσωμοί*) with Christ.[133]

The difference between the authors quoted and Symeon is that the latter places a stronger emphasis upon the transfiguration and deification of man through his incorporation into the body of Christ, while they accentuate the incorporation itself. The emphasis on deification, however, is to be found in Dionysios and especially Maximos the Confessor. The latter writes:

> Through Communion man is honoured with being made god from man...The participation in the holy and life-giving mysteries shows [men's] adoption by our God, [their] unity and relationship [with Him], the divine likeness and deification.[134]

If the eucharistic doctrine of John Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria might be defined as a naturalization of the understanding of the sacrament, and that of Dionysios and Maximos as a spiritualization of it, one can say that Symeon provides a kind of synthesis. It should also be mentioned that, in spite of Symeon's probable **(p. 95)** acquaintance with the eucharistic doctrines of Dionysios and Maximos, he was still alien to the Dionysian tradition of the excessive symbolization of the whole Liturgy with all its elements, including the holy bread and wine themselves.[135]

The final point in Symeon's eucharistic piety which one would have to consider is his understanding of the Eucharist as a festal office, even though it is celebrated every day. Reference was made above to A. Schmemann's opinion that the initial meaning of the Eucharist as an exceptional and festal celebration was lost once the Liturgy was inserted in the everyday routine of monastic offices. If this loss was true of the Studite tradition in general, it does not correspond to its great representatives, such as Theodore and Symeon. For the latter the daily celebration of the Liturgy and daily Communion in no way involved their deformation into ordinary routine or habit. On the contrary, Symeon claims that Holy Communion makes our whole life Easter, the transition from earthly to heavenly being:

> If you...receive the divine mysteries in such a manner, your entire life will become a feast; and not a feast, but the beginning of the unique feast and Easter, a passing and migration from the sensible to the intelligible world...where we will live with Christ and reign with Him.[136]

We see how Symeon returns to the initial meaning of the Liturgy as sanctiflcation of the whole of reality and transfiguration of human time. The life of the one who receives Christ worthily in Holy Communion becomes a single and unceasing Liturgy.

6. The Annual Cycle of Feasts in Symeon

The idea of the sanctiflcation of reality was initially treated as a fundamental principle in both the weekly cycle of divine offices and the annual cycle of church feasts. As the Holy Liturgy is the centre of a week or day, Holy Easter is the centre of a whole year.

In the Studite tradition feasts played an important role, giving rhythm to the whole sequence of monastic life throughout the year. By the time of Theodore the annual cycle of offices had been **(p. 96)** developed in the Byzantine Church in such a way that almost every day was devoted to a feast or the commemoration of a certain saint. 'Yesterday we praised St Chrysostom; today we praise the ever-memorable Ephrem, and tomorrow we will praise another saint', says Theodore in the 'Catechesis' on 28 January.[137] Life in the monastery is described by him as an unceasing passing 'from one feast to another'.[138] In contrast to early monastic texts, which almost completely ignore the theme of feasts,[139] in the writings of Theodore this theme occupies a very important place.

Theodore's theory of the Christian feast can be reduced to the following two features. Firstly, church feasts are not for feeding the body, or for rest, as secular feasts are,[140] but for the profit of our souls and to encourage us in virtuous living. Each feast is established in order to give us the possibility of experiencing the reality which stands behind it. If there is a commemoration of a certain event from Jesus Christ's life, it means that this event becomes somehow actual in our life. 'We rejoice with joy', says Theodore, 'when a certain feast of our Lord comes. And this is natural, because we are being enlightened when contemplating [*ἀναθεωρον^ντες*] the mystery, in honour of which the feast is established'.[141] The participle *ἀναθεωρον^ντες* derives from *θεωρία*, the term which has here the same meaning as in patristic teaching on Scripture: internal content. If there is a saint's day, we enter into the contemplation of his life, in order to be enabled to imitate his virtues.[142]

Secondly, Theodore usually stresses the timeless character of each **(p. 97)** Christian feast. The church calendar is a kind of reflection of the eternal in the temporal: the reality of a feast does not depend on its date. In the middle of Great Lent Theodore says:

> Why do we desire to reach this Easter, which comes and goes away? Did we not do this for many years...? What is much more desirable is the Easter which can be celebrated every day [*τὸ καθ' ἑκάστην ἡμέραν ἐπιτελούμενον πάσχα*]. What is this Easter? Purification of sins, contrition of the heart, tears of compunction, purity of conscience, mortification of wordly members: of harlotry, impurity, passion, evil lust...[143]

After the end of the Pascal cycle of feasts he says:

> Easter has passed, and the celebration has finished, but the joy and feast, if we want, have not passed, for we must always spiritually rejoice...How is this possible? If the memory of the suffering of Christ our Saviour is always new and alive in us...Do not say: 'It is not Great Lent now.' For the sober it is always Great Lent.[144]

This doctrine of continual feast, unceasing Great Lent and daily Easter was entirely assimilated by Symeon the New Theologian (cf. his understanding of the Eucharist as a daily feast). He also absorbed the respect for the church calendar with all its feasts and saints' days, which is characteristic of the Studite tradition. Some of his 'Catechetical Discourses', like those of Theodore, are connected with current periods of the annual cycle, in particular Great Lent and Easter. Occasionally Symeon refers to the lives of saints and cites their virtues as an example; however, he did not devote an entire sermon to the commemoration of any particular saint, except for the encomium on his spiritual father Symeon the Studite, which is mentioned by Nikitas but has not survived.[145]

Symeon develops his understanding of Christian feasts in *Eth*.14, named 'On feasts, and how they must be celebrated'. Having started with a series of attacks on secular feasts, Symeon then turns to a sharp criticism of the magnificent ceremonial of some church celebrations:

> Do not think that a feast consists of bright clothes, proud horses, precious perfumes, candles, lamps and crowds of people...What is the profit for me, my dear, if I not only set fire to a number of candles and lamps in the **(p. 98)** church...but also get so many lamps, that they give as much light as the sun in the heaven; and if instead of many lamps I put stars in the ceiling of the church, and make it a new heaven...and if I rejoice in this illumination, and become an object of people's amazement and praise; and yet very soon, when everything is extinguished, I myself am left in darkness?[146]

What is the profit, Symeon continues, if today I use scent and tomorrow will smell with the stench of the flesh? 'Christ did not command us to celebrate feasts in such a manner,' Symeon concludes energetically.[147]

Such a picturesque and ironic description of Constantinopolitan festal customs may compel one to think that Symeon was not in favour of the ecclesiastical grandeur of the Byzantine capital. Where else than the Great Church of St. Sophia is implied, when speaking of splendid ceremonies with crowds of people and mounted escorts? Who else if not Byzantine courtiers and aristocracy are presupposed when Symeon describes the people in bright clothes, using perfumes? If we remember that those golden mosaics with which the walls and ceilings of Byzantine churches were overlaid must have imitated sunshine, and stars were often used in ornaments of a ceiling to imitate the sky, we will realize that Symeon's criticism is specific. His heart was not touched even by such masterpieces of architecture and decoration as St. Sophia.

Symeon would not be a true mystic if this criticism was to be all he could say concerning feasts. Having emphasized that he is not in principle an adversary of splendid celebrations, and that he even recommends 'that these things be done more solemnly', Symeon turns to an explanation of 'what the mystery of the feast of the faithful is'. Everything in the church can be understood in a symbolic manner. The church illuminated by candles symbolizes the soul enlightened by virtues and enlightening our thoughts. The perfumes correspond to the grace of the Holy Spirit. The crowds of people represent the angelic choir and church music symbolizes angelic singing. The presence of friends, acquaintances, and the aristocracy signifies the Apostles, prophets, martyrs, and all the saints.[148]

This is nothing else than a *θεωρία μνσικήν*—a mystical interpretation of all elements of the church in the tradition of Dionysios the Areopagite and Maximos the Confessor. The difference is, as mentioned earlier, that Symeon does not

interpret the Liturgy itself in a symbolic manner, but only the temple with its details.

(p. 99) Let us now look at two 'Catechetical Discourses', the one relating to Great Lent, and the other to Easter. *Cat*. 11 was delivered at the end of the first week of Great Lent and named 'On Fasting'. Symeon begins by saying that perhaps he should have addressed this sermon to his listeners on the previous Sunday, before Lent began, but since he knew that both monks and laity fast with enthusiasm during this first week, he postponed the sermon until this present occasion, when, after the Saturday of Theodore Tyron and the Sunday of Orthodoxy, people are likely to relax or even completely reject abstinence and 'return to their former habits'.[149] Then Symeon points to the profit of fasting:

> This physician of our souls is able in one case to quieten the fevers and impulses of the flesh; in another to alleviate bad temper, in yet another to expel sleeping, in another to stir up zeal, and in yet another to restore purity of mind and to set it free from evil thoughts...Fasting gradually disperses and drives away spiritual darkness and the veil of the sin that lies on the soul, as the sun dispels the mist. Fasting enables us spiritually to see that spiritual air in which Christ, the Sun without setting, does not rise but shines unceasingly.[150]

Continuing, Symeon speaks of fasting as a foundation of all the virtues and describes the impression he had received when observing the spiritual condition of people during the first week of Lent: 'At that time the monastery seemed to me to be uninhabited by people and inhabited only by angels, for I did not hear any worldly word but only the glorification which we offered to God.'[151]

There are many similar details in lenten sermons by Theodore the Studite. The latter also usually offered a special sermon at the end of the first week of Lent.[152] He also described the good spiritual condition of people during the first week, when 'towns and villages grow quiet from noise and chatter, and instead everywhere psalmody, glorifications, litanies, and prayers are said'.[153] The difference between Symeon and Theodore is, as usual, that the first puts the vision of Christ as the aim of fasting, while the second promises blessed life with Christ after death.

In Symeon's Paschal sermon (*Cat*. 13) the contrast with Theodore is more obvious. Symeon speaks here of the 'resurrection of Christ which takes place mystically in us at all times'. As Christ after His **(p. 100)** death descended into Hell and then rose from the dead, so likewise, when we, having come out from the world, enter into the tomb of repentance and humility, Christ descends into our bodies, as into the tomb, and, uniting Himself with our souls, raises them up.[154] In this manner Christ's resurrection becomes our own resurrection, when our soul, formerly dead, becomes alive. It happens palpably to the soul:

> The soul itself cannot live unless it is ineffably and without confusion united to God, Who is truly eternal life. Before this union in knowledge, vision and perception it is dead...There is no knowledge without vision, nor vision without knowledge...Unless the mind comes to the contemplation of the things that are above thought, it does not feel mystical energy.[155]

We remember that Theodore the Studite describes the resurrection of the soul as consisting in the purification of sins, mortification of passions, and other similar things (see the quotation from *Sh*. *Cat*. 67 above). If in Theodore there predominate negative expressions and subdued colours, in Symeon we find his usual attention to mystical themes, such as the vision of God, the conscious awareness of His grace and the contemplation of divine light, in the bright tones of direct description. He continues with the mystical interpretation of two church hymns: 'We have seen the resurrection of Christ', which is sung every Sunday and especially during the Paschal period, and 'The Lord is God and has revealed Himself to us', which is peculiar to festal matins. Why, Symeon asks, do we not sing 'we have believed in the resurrection of Christ', instead of 'we have seen' it, since in fact Christ rose one thousand years ago and even then nobody saw how it happened?

> Does the divine Scripture (*ἡ θεία γραφή*) want us to lie? Far from it! Rather, it urges us to speak the truth, that the resurrection of Christ takes place in each of us, the believers, when Christ the Lord arises in us, and not once, but every hour, bearing light and flashing with the lightnings of incorruption and deity. For the light-giving presence of the Spirit shows us...the resurrection of the Lord, or rather, it grants us to see the Risen One Himself. This is why we say: 'The Lord is God and has revealed Himself to us'...When this happens to us through the Spirit, Christ raises us up from the dead, giving us life, and grants us to see Him, Who is immortal

and indestructible.[156]

Let us point out that the method Symeon uses in the exegesis of ecclesiastical texts is exactly the same as that which he used for Holy **(p. 101)** Scripture: analysis of the literal meaning of the text and then mystical interpretation of it with reference to personal inner experience. Perhaps it is not just coincidence that Symeon calls liturgical texts 'divine Scripture'.

To conclude, divine worship in Symeon's view was always deeply interconnected with mystical life, and he never regarded the second as possible without the first, nor the first without the second.[157] The liturgical office is, therefore, an integral part of Symeon's spirituality. It was also an important ingredient of Symeon's theology, which might be defined as 'liturgical' or 'eucharistic', being deeply rooted in the experience Symeon received through divine worship. In Symeon we find an interdependence of theology and liturgy, which is also characteristic of Orthodox tradition in general.[158]

Celebrating feasts, receiving Communion at every liturgy, attending other daily offices and listening to the liturgical texts, Symeon fully participated in the *ἰατορία* of the Byzantine Church of his time. At the same time he was always striving to ascend from the earthly reality of the Church to its *μνστικὴ θεωρία*: from the splendour of the festal office to what is symbolized by it; from the literal meaning of liturgical texts to their inner content; from the material bread of the Eucharist to Christ's deified body and participation of this body 'with awareness and consciousness'.

Notes:

(1) One arrives at this figure by adding some three years of Symeon's monastic life before ordination to forty-eight years of his priesthood.

(2) Leloir, *Désert*, 173.

(3) On the three types of monasticism see Deseille, *Lumirère*, 21–6. Cf. John Klimakos, *Ladder* 1 [641]. The word 'scetiot' is an adjective from Scete, or Skiti (Greek *Σκήτη*)—initially the name of the monastic centre in the Egyptian desert (now Wâdi-el-Natrun); later it became a common noun signifying semi-eremitical monasticism.

(4) Taft, *Hours*, 60.

(5) Ibid. 90.

(6) Ibid. 79.

(7) *Asc. Disc.* (40) 4 [877 AB].

(8) According to this theory, the Septenary is formed by vespers, compline, midnight office, matins (with the first hour), third, sixth, and ninth hours. The Liturgy is not included in the number of seven both because it is not a daily office, and because, being the eighth office, it symbolizes 'the age to come'. The Septenary was not a rejection of the principle of continuous prayer, as some scholars have suggested; on the contrary, the two principles coexisted in Egyptian monasticism: cf. the thesis of Mensbrugge in 'Prayer-Time', 453, and the objections of Veilleux in *Liturgie*, 281–2. Cf. the story from the *Apophthegmata*, Epiphanios 3 [164 B–C]: Epiphanios of Salamis was told by the abbot of one Palestinian monastery that the monks there diligently recited Terce, Sext, and None. 'You obviously neglect the other hours of the day', he answered, 'for the true monk must have prayer and psalmody in his heart without ceasing.'

(9) *Ep.* 207. 3 [186].

(10) *Hom. Mat.* 68 [297].

(11) *Inst.* 2. 5–10 [20–6].

(12) We do not know when exactly silent prayer was withdrawn from monastic offices, but in later sources, such as the Studite *typika*, we have no reference to it.

(13) *Τροπάριον*—initially (4th century ?) a short prayer written in poetic prose and inserted after each verse of the psalm; in later Byzantine use (6th–9th centuries) existed separately from psalms. *κανών* consists of nine canticles (odes), each of which includes several *Τροπάρτα*: cf. Wellesz, *History*, 171, 198.

(14) Christ and Paranikas, *Anthologia*, XXIX–XXX. Cf. the following story in the *Gerontikon*: The disciple came to the elder complaining that, though he 'recited the *canon* and the hours, according to the *Octoichos*,' he could not acquire true contrition of soul. The elder answered: 'This is why the contrition and mourning escape you. Remember how the great Fathers who lived in solitude and without prescribed tunes and *troparia*, but with some psalms only, shone in the world as true stars. Like that were Abba Paul the Simple, Abba Pamvo, Abba Apollo, and other divine Fathers, who raised the dead and cast out devils...and they did so neither by songs, nor by *troparia* and tones [*οὐκ ἐν ᾄσμασι καὶ τροπαρίις και ἤχοις*], but by prayer with a contrite soul and by fasting...'; *Εὐεργετινός* 11. 5. 3 [2. 169]. Canons came into use in Byzantine liturgical worship in 7th-9th centuries. This is why the episode with Pamvo should not be dated earlier than the 7th century (unless the story itself derives from the earlier period and the term 'canon' is a later interpolation).

(15) Wellesz, *History*, 165.

(16) In modern scholarship it is suggested that the *Hypotyposis* was compiled by Theodore's followers after his death: see Leroy, 'Réforme', 208–9; Taft, 'Athos', 183. On its two versions see Bertoniere, *Vigil*, 165–6.

(17) Cf. *Hyptyposis*: Tn the liturgy we do not sing "Bless the Lord, O my soul" [Ps. 102/103], but what is traditional for the Great Church'; see Dmitriyevsky, *Opisanie* i. 1. 227. In the version of *PG 99* this remark is absent. We must note that the version published by Dmitriyevsky is based on more ancient manuscripts than is that of *PG* and contains some passages omitted in *PG*.

(18) See Ware, 'Meaning' [*Triodion*, 40–2].

(19) Schmemann, *Introduction*, 211. Generally, the Studite office was a hybrid of the office of the Palestinian Lavra of St. Savvas with material from the office of the Great Church in Constantinople: see Taft, 'Athos', 182.

(20) For the office of the Great Church the reconstruction by J. Mateos, *Typicon*, pp. xxii-xxiii, is used. For the Studite Typika see, for example, the description of the offices on 1 and 2 September in the Typikon of the Monastery 'Evergetidos': Dmitriyevsky, *Opisanie* i. 1. 256–9.

(28) *Παννυχὶς* (literally, 'all-night') is not mentioned in the *Hypotyposis* by Theodore, but is mentioned in the *Diatyposis* (*Διατύπωσις*) by Athanasios the Athonite: Dmitriyevsky, *Opisanie* i. 1. 147; Uspensky, 'Chin', 27. This office is nothing else but *μεσονυκτικόν* (office at cockcrow), and must not be confused with the all-night vigil, which existed in the Palestinian monasteries, but was not characteristic for the Studite tradition: cf. Dmitriyevsky, *Opisanie* i. 1. cxxix.

(29) *Vie* 25. 13–14.

(30) *Vie* 28. 1–3.

(31) The expression 'went out to the *κάθισμα* of the cell' (*Vie* 26. 19–20) may be understood as sitting on a chair (*κάθισμα*) outside the cell and having a rest. Another explanation is that Symeon went to church to attend the office of the hours (e.g. *τριτοεκιτ* which included selected psalms or even *κάθισμα*, if it was Lent); this is how I. Hausherr understands this passage: see *Mystique*, 37 (n. 4). It seems, however, that the first explanation is more probable.

(32) *Vie* 26. 20–27. 2.

(33) *Vie* 27. 5.

(34) *Vie* 35. 19–20 (*τῆς ἑσπέρας μετά πάσαν ἄλλην ὑμνολογὶαν*), 'in the evening, after all other offices').

(35) *Cat*. 26. 20–67. *Στιχολογὶα*—reading of the Psalter divided into *κάθίσματα*. Concerning *ἀνάγνωσις* (which could be either from Scripture or from ascetic literature), as well as concerning *ἑξάψαλμος* and *τροπάριος* see above. See

also Krivochéine, *SC* 113. 70–5.

(36) In the Studite use the third and sixth hours were sometimes joined together into one office, *τριτοέκτι*. This office was also performed in the Great Church during Lent: cf. Mateos, *Typicon*, p. xxiv.

(37) *Cat*. 26. 114–15.

(38) *Cat*. 26. 257–61: the term *λυχνικόν* (literally, 'with the light') is a synonym of *ἑσπερινός* (which is characteristic of a later usage): both mean vespers. Cf. the same usage of the term *λυχνικόν* in the *Typikon* of the Great Church: Mateos, *Typicon*, pp. xxii–xxiii.

(39) *Cat*. 26. 268: the term *ἑσπεριναὶ εὐχαί* ('evening prayers'), as distinct from 'vespers', must signify *ἀπόδειπνον* (compline): cf. Krivochéine, *SC* 113. 92–3 (n. 1).

(40) As early as in the fourth century Basil the Great associates midnight office with Psalm 118/119: *Long Rules* 37. 5 [1016B]. Cf. Lamb, *Psalms*, 57.

(41) *Cat*. 26. 294–8.

(42) *Cat*. 26. 20–7.

(43) *Cat*. 26. 23–38.

(44) Cf. the observations concerning the *Method* attributed to Symeon in the Conclusion of this study.

(45) *Ladder* 28 [1132 D].

(46) Cf. Krivochéine, *Light*, 89.

(47) *Gr. Cat*. I. 14.

(48) *Cat*. 26. 47–59.

(49) *See Asc*. 5. Cf. the discussion in chapter 4.

(50) *Asc*. 24.

(51) *Asc*. 8.

(52) For example, John Klimakos devoted the whole of ch. 7 of his 'Ladder' to the 'joy-making mourning': he speaks of mourning before lying down in bed and during meals [805 AB], every evening [805 B], 'in cities and crowds' [816 C], 'in any place' [804 D] and of 'unceasing mourning' [816 D]; but not specially of tears in church during offices.

(53) *Cat*. 4. 517–59.

(54) *Cat*. 26. 61–2; *Cat*. 30. 197. Cf. *Vie* 28. 4–5.

(55) *Cat*. 30. 210–13. Cf. the instructions to the *canonarch* in Theodore the Studite's *Gr. Cat*. 1. 3. 3 and *Iamb*. 10.

(56) *Cat*. 30. 195–6.

(57) See *Cat*. 22. 278; *Hymn* 58. 355. Cf. Krivochéine, *Light*, 86–90. On *Κρυπτὴ μελέτη* see Hausherr, *Noms*, 167–75.

(58) *Cap*. 3. 100.

(59) Veilleux, *Liturgie*, 228–35.

(60) Herding, *Antonius*, 80 ff.

(61) *Meadow*, chs. 4, 28, 79, 86, 106, 161, 177. John Moschos also mentions the custom, which existed in Antioch, of partaking once a year, on Holy Thursday: see ch. 79. It seems, the custom was long established: two centuries before John Chrysostom reproached those Antiochians who received Communion only once a year: *Hom. I Tim*. 5. 3 [529–30].

(62) Cyprian of Carthage, *Prayer* 18 [280]; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystag*. 5. 15 [162].

(63) *Ep*. 93 [203–4]. When saying 'we partake four times a week', Basil might meanboth himself and the people of Cappadocia (together with him).

(64) *Tract. John* 16. 15. 35 [267].

(65) *Hist. Mon*. 7. 13. 4 [302].

(66) Cf. Salaville, 'Messe', 282–98.

(67) *Epist*. 555 [849].

(68) *Pen*. 2. 31 [1753 A].

(69) Ibid. 1. 10 [1733 D].

(70) Ibid. 2. 6 [1749 B].

(71) *Sh. Cat*. 107.

(72) As in *Pen*. 2. 31 (quoted above).

(73) Literally 'blessing', i.e. the blessed bread, otherwise known in Byzantine usage as *ἀντίδωρον*, which means 'instead of the holy gifts'. It was a simple bread and was not regarded as 'Communion...in the form of blessed bread', as D. Krausmüller thinks: see 'Sroudion', 71.

(74) *Hyp*. 27 [*PG* 99,1713 B]. Originally, the *τυπικὰ* was a kind of non-eucharistic office of Communion (more modest than the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts). In a later usage this office was inserted into the eucharistic Liturgy: see Mateos, 'Horologion', 66–8. In the development of the *τυπικὰ* there was also an intermediate stage when the office was already separated from Communion but not yet inserted in the eucharistic Liturgy: ibid. 68. The Studite *Hypotyposis* appears to reflect this stage.

(75) Dmitriyevsky, *Opisanie* i. 1. 248. The *Diatyposis* was written by Athanasios some time before his death (no later than the first years of the eleventh century): see Taft, 'Athos', 183 (with bibliography on the question). Since the *Diatyposis* was based on the *Hypotyposis* of Theodore the Studite, it serves as important evidence for Studite liturgical practice.

(76) Cf. Herman, 'Kommunion', 210 ff.

(77) See *Εὐεργετινός* 29 [4, 491–541].

(78) Dmitriyevsky, *Opisanie* i. 1, 603. The fact that the *typika* might have been recited in cell indicates that by the time of Paul this office was no longer connected with Communion.

(79) Ibid. 619–20.

(80) See *Εὐεργετινός* 35 [4, 542].

(81) *Introduction*, 199.

(82) Ibid. 198–201.

(83) *Eth*. 1. 6. 165–72.

(84) *Eth*. 10. 790–1.

(85) *Eth*. 3. 433–5.

(86) *Cat*. 26. 119–20.

(87) Cf. Krivochéine, *Light*, 121.

(88) *Cat*. 4. 604–16.

(89) *Ep*. 2. 106–28 [*Vatic, gr*. 1782, fol. 207, line 24—fol. 207V., line 8].

(90) See, especially, *Light*, 103–23.

(91) *Eth*. 10. 774–5.

(92) *Eth*. 14. 225–31.

(93) *Eth*. 14. 242–7.

(94) *Eth*. 14. 261–76.

(95) *Eth*. 10. 760–4.

(96) *Cat. Or*. 40 [160–1].

(97) Cf. the discussion of Baptism in Symeon in chapter 9.

(98) *SC* 122. 33.

(99) His confidence in the real presence of Christ in the consecrated gifts is confirmed by the following passage: 'Where the bread is placed and the wine is poured in the name of Your flesh and Your blood, O Word, You are there Yourself...and they really become Your body and Your blood through the coming of the Holy Spirit...'; *Hymn* 14. 55–9.

(100) Darrouzès, *SC* 122. 32.

(101) The two Symeons were not the only Byzantine authors who linked tears and Communion. We can recall at least one parallel from the later theologian, Theognostos: 'Having been made whiter than snow by the outpourings of tears, touch the holy gifts...'; *Chapt*. 18 [258]. Cf. also the *Canon for Holy Communion*, Ode Three: 'Give me, O Christ, the drops of tears, which purify the impurity of my heart...so that I may come to the Communion of Thy divine gifts' [*Horologion*, 495].

(102) *Cat*. 4. 1–18.

(103) Cf. Basil, *Sh. Rules* 16 [1092 D]. Cf. also Chryssavgis, *Ascent*, 129–30; Hausherr, *Penthos*, 54; Leloir, 'Désert', 215–19; Sylvia Mary, 'Tears', 432. See also the discussion of tears in Symeon in chapter 10.

(104) *Virg*. 17 [272 C]. On attribution see *Clavis*, ii. 46.

(105) *Quest*. 105 [757C–760 A].

(106) *Ladder* 7 [809 D].

(107) Ibid. 7 [805 C]; 7 [809 C].

(108) Ibid. 7 [805 C].

(109) *Cat*. 4. 558.

(110) Krivochéine, *Light*, 118–19.

(111) Cf. *Prayer* 3 [224 B]; *Iamb*. 1–3 [225 BC].

(112) Ode Nine [*Horologion*, 498]. This *Canon* was probably written after Symeon's death. Cf. the remarks in the Conclusion concerning the influence of Symeon on the eucharistic piety of the Orthodox Church. Cf. also Theognostos, *Chapt*. 70 [269]: 'Without purification of yourself do not dare to touch the holy mysteries, so as not to be burned, like hay, by divine fire, and not to be destroyed, like melted wax [cf. Ps. 67/68: 2]'.

(113) *Eth*. 14. 214–23.

(114) *Hymn* 20. 27–31.

(115) *Theol*. 3. 150–2.

(116) This doctrine will be discussed in chapter 10.

(117) *Hymn* 30. 467–72.

(118) *Hymn* 30. 474–88.

(119) *Eth*. 2. 7. 167–200.

(120) *Eth*. 3. 506–11.

(121) Cf. *Eth*. 1. 3. 42–4; *Eth*. 2. 7. 200.

(122) *Eth*. 1. 3. 32–7.

(123) The use of the Pauline term *σύσσωμος* (cf. Eph. 3. 6) became traditional for eucharistic texts of the Fathers. See quotations from Cyril of Jerusalem and John Chrysostom below.

(124) *Eth*. 1. 3. 79–86.

(125) *Eth*. 1. 3. 91–112.

(126) *Hymn Virg*. 37. 2 [133]. On Ephrem's 'eucharistic realism' see Yousif, *Euch-aristie*, 288–94.

(127) *My stag*. 4. 3 [136].

(128) John Chrysostom, *Hom. John* 46. 3 [260].

(129) Ibid. [261].

(130) *Hom. I Cor*. 24 [200].

(131) *Hom. John* 10. 2 [341 D].

(132) *Hom. John* 11. 11 [556 D–557 C].

(133) Ibid. [560 B].

(134) *Myst*. 26 [704 D; 709 C].

(135) On the liturgical symbolism of Dionysios see Bornert, *Commentaires*, 169–78 (esp.170–3).

(136) *Eth*. 14. 281–9.

(137) *Sh. Cat.* 42. The Studite *Hypotyposis* 29 [*PG* 99. 1716 A] specially mentions 'the days where there is a commemoration of a saint'. However, it does not necessarily mean that there were days without the commemoration of saints; the question in *Hyp.* 29 is, most probably, about the so-called 'great saints', the commemoration of whom was regarded as a feast.

(138) *Sh. Cat.* 34.

(139) If they mention feasts, they often do so in the same way as they speak of the '*troparia* and *canons*' (see above). Paul of Evergetis devotes one chapter of his anthology of monastic texts to the celebration of feasts: the main theme of the collection of passages from the *Gerontikon* ('Sayings of Elders') is the necessity of abstinence for monks on feast days. We recognize the traditional ironic intonation: 'For laymen and the rich, but not for monks, it is allowed to fast forty days, that is, in Great Lent, and to relax and rest fifty days, that is, during Pentecost. In the same way to sing *troparia* and *canons*, and to vocalize tones is fitting for priests in the world and for other people [but not for monks]': *Ἐνεργετινὶς* 19. 5 [2. 249].

(140) Theodore compares with pigs those lay people who spend feasts in entertainments, parties, eating and drinking: *Sh. Cat.* 37.

(141) *Sh. Cat.* 26.

(142) *Sh. Cat.* 38.

(143) *Sh. Cat.* 67.

(144) *Sh. Cat.* 2. Cf. also ibid. 23: 'the spiritual feast which lasts during one's whole life is one and unceasing'.

(145) *Vie* 72. 21–2.

(146) *Eth.* 14. 54–68.

(147) *Eth.* 14. 68–81.

(148) *Eth.* 14. 83–153.

(149) *Cat.* 11. 6–41.

(150) *Cat.* 11. 49–66.

(151) *Cat.* 11. 116–20.

(152) Cf. *Sh. Cat.* 57.

(153) *Sh. Cat.* 54.

(154) *Cat.* 13. 35–55.

(155) *Cat.* 13. 68–79.

(156) *Cat.* l13. 105–21.

(157) I take very much the opposite point of view to the statement by some scholars that the 'direct, mystical communication with God', which was preached by Symeon and the later Hesychasts, 'was in apparent contradiction to Orthodox worship, which was associated with the sacraments of the Church and the veneration of icons': Kazhdan and Constable, *Power*, 91. On the contrary, Orthodox worship in general and the sacrament of the Eucharist in particular formed the foundation of Symeon's mysticism, along with the sacrament of Baptism (see chapter 9). As to the veneration of icons, it also constituted an integral part of Symeon's mysticism: cf. his description of the mystical vision of light which took place immediately after he venerated an icon of the Holy Virgin (*Euch.* 2. 265–9); cf. also Symeon's public defence of the veneration of the icon of Symeon the Studite described by Nikitas in *Vie* 87. 21–93. II

(see the quotations in chapter 6).

(158) On this interdependence see Schmemann, *Tradition*, 49–88.

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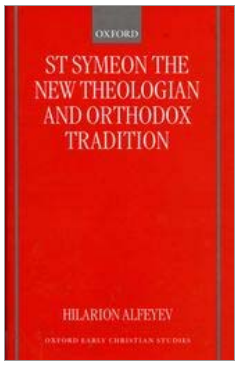

St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition
Hilarion Alfeyev

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The Influence of Symeon the Studite on Symeon the New Theologian

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Source: Theologian and Orthodox TraditionHilarion Alfeyev
Author(s):

Hilarion Alfeyev

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter focuses on Symeon the Studite's influence over his disciple Symeon the New Theologian. It has been stated that the writings by the Studite do not provide ‘any definite clue to help us understand the reason why he was able to exercise…profound influence on Symeon…’. This chapter indicates some points of correspondence between the two Symeons, providing at least some ideas about the nature of the Studite's influence. Of course, Symeon was primarily influenced by the personality and mystical gifts of his teacher, but in so far as the writings of the latter reflect his spirituality, they were also important for Symeon, who quoted them as a written testament of his spiritual father. Symeon the Studite's ascetical approach is discussed, along with Symeon the New Theologian's development of Symeon the Studite's ascetical ideas. The mysticism of the two Symeons is also considered. In the ‘Ascetical Discourse’, which is the only surviving writing of the Studite, the basic themes are tears and compunction, prayer, and ascetical practice.

Keywords: Symeon the Studite, Symeon the New Theologian, spirituality, mysticism, prayer, ascetical ideas, Ascetical Discourse, tears, compunction

In Chapter 1 the personality of Symeon the Studite was discussed. The present chapter will primarily concentrate on the literary influence which was exercised by the Studite over his disciple. It has been stated that the writings by the Studite do not provide ‘any definite clue to help us understand the reason why he was able to exercise…profound influence on Symeon…’[1] I cannot agree with this statement of a scholar who is elsewhere very careful in his suggestions about Symeon, and I indicate here some points of correspondence between the two Symeons, which, I think, do provide us with at least some ideas about the nature of the Studite’s influence. Of course, Symeon was

primarily influenced by the personality and mystical gifts of his teacher, but in so far as the writings of the latter reflect his spirituality, they were also important for Symeon, who quoted them as a written testament of his spiritual father.

1. Ascetical Approach of Symeon the Studite

In the 'Ascetical Discourse', which is the only surviving writing of the Studite, we are not dealing with a coherent narration, but with an assortment of disconnected passages. The narrative is intended only for monks, and moreover for those living within the monastery walls and not for solitaries. In manuscripts the work begins with the word *Ἀδελφέ* ('Brother') and the second person singular is employed throughout the discourse: this may mean that it was addressed to a concrete disciple of the Studite. One wonders whether the addressee of the discourse was not Symeon. For us the discourse is specially important because we find in it several motifs which were to become characteristic of Symeon. The following survey of the basic themes **(p. 103)** of the discourse shows that the Studite was Symeon's predecessor not only as his teacher but also as an ascetical writer.

Tears and Compunction

This theme is a leitmotif of the whole work: the Studite constantly returns to it. Reference has already been made to the passages where the Studite recommends us to weep when attending church offices[2] and not to partake of Holy Communion without tears.[3] He also speaks of 'many tears' during evening prayer in the cell,[4] and of the necessity to pray in the cell 'with contrition, attention and unceasing weeping'.[5] So the weeping is to be constant: 'Have unceasing weeping, and do not grow satiated with your tears.'[6] One must weep not only for oneself, but also for other people.[7] Through mourning a man purifies himself from passions, says the Studite.[8] Prayer with tears teaches a man all the virtues.[9] At the same time the virtues and ascetical efforts promote compunction and tears.[10]

For the Studite weeping is directly connected with what he calls 'divine illumination,' that is, with mystical experience. 'Where there is contrition with spiritual weeping, there is also divine illumination', the Studite emphasizes.[11] 'Try to purify yourself from passions through tears,' he advises, 'so that, having been illuminated by grace, you…reach the blessing of the pure in heart.'[12] If tears cause divine illumination, the illumination itself, in its turn, produces spiritual joy and tears with compunction.[13]

Such frequent repetition of the same motif without doubt testifies that the Studite had his own experience of constant weeping. If one searches for literary parallels, one can easily find them in early monastic texts, particularly in Evagrios, who said: 'First pray for the gift of tears, so that through sorrowing you may tame what is savage in your soul…Pray with tears and all you ask will be heard.'[14] John Klimakos mentions prayer with compunction and tears,[15] unceasing compunction and mourning,[16] tears with spiritual joy,[17] tears as a **(p. 104)** means for the extermination of passions;[18] divine illumination as a result of mourning.[19] There are also very important texts on tears by Isaac the Syrian, which will be recalled in a later section. In comparison with Isaac and John Klimakos the Studite is much more concise. He does not provide a special theory of tears and compunction, but repeats practical advice concerning them.

Prayer

The Studite points to the traditional monastic ideal of unceasing prayer:

> It is necessary to have the mind always with God, both in sleep and in waking hours, during meals and conversations, in manual labour and every other activity, according to the prophet's word: 'I have set the Lord always before me' (Ps. 16:8).[20]

Every part of this passage is in accordance with early ascetical Fathers. Diadochos says that the remembrance of God must not be interrupted even in sleep.[21] The soul which has been engaged with the word of God all day, will be occupied with it in sleep too, says John Klimakos.[22] That prayer is to be continued during labour, was emphasized by many authors.[23] The verse from Psalm 16 is traditionally understood in ascetical literature as an indication of unceasing prayer; cf. in Theodore of Edessa:

> If a man fixes his intellect without distraction on our Master and God, then the Saviour…[will] deliver such a soul from its impassionate servitude. It is of this that the prophet speaks when he says: 'I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.' What is sweeter or safer than always

to have the Lord at our right hand?[24]

Several examples of practical advice concerning evening and night prayer are provided by the Studite. Though he admits that in exceptional cases the evening prayer can be limited to the reciting of the *Trisagion*,[25] in general he recommends not to shorten evening prayer, **(p. 105)** even if one is very tired after a lot of labour: 'however much a man gets tired in labour, if he is deprived of prayer, let him know that he has lost something great'.[26] As to night prayer, the Studite suggests the following order of vigil:

> In the hours of vigil it is useful for you to recite some two hours, and to pray two hours in compunction with tears; and then [read] a canon, whichever you want, and twelve psalms, if you want, and 'the undefiled' (*τὸν ἀμωμον*), and the prayer of St. Eustratios. This is when nights are long. And when they are short, the rule is shorter, according to the strength given to you by God.[27]

So the whole vigil must take some six hours. This means, a monk should not sleep at all in the night of vigil: in the Studite monastery, the break between compline and morning office must have not been much more than six hours (however, it could have depended on seasons and the length of nights, as the remark by the Studite shows). As regards the structure of the recommended vigil, it does not precisely correspond to any church office or traditional rule of prayer: it seems that the Studite created it by himself, using traditional elements, such as the twelve psalms, canon, Psalm 118/119 (indicated as 'the undefiled') and one prayer from the Saturday μεσονυκτικόν (ascribed to St. Eustratios).[28] The remarks 'which you want' and 'if you want', referring respectively to the canon and twelve psalms, show that the Studite left to the disciple's discretion whether to shorten or change the structure of the vigil.

What did the Studite mean when speaking of recitation (*ἀνάγνωσις*) and prayer (*εὐχή*) as two different elements of vigil? The first term in ascetical texts usually means reading psalms, or less commonly other parts of Scripture. The second term in this context may mean both prayer using the repetition of a short formula (*νοερά προσευχή*, 'the prayer of the mind'), and prayer using one's own words. That the Studite was in favour of the latter type of prayer is confirmed by another passage, where he gives an example of prayer with one's own words with uplifted hands, and then concludes: 'Adding to this other [words], which God will put into your mind, remain in prayer…'[29]

There are also two cases which may occur during one's prayer **(p. 106)** which are discussed by the Studite. First, the Studite warns against false visions of light during prayer:

> If, when you are praying, there is any anxiety or knocking, or light flashes up, or something else happens, do not fear, but pray even more zealously…For it can happen that worry and anxiety and ecstasy (ἐκστασις) are demonic.[30]

Here the Studite follows Evagrios, who in his 153 'Chapters on Prayer', known in the time of the Studite as a writing by Neilos of Sinai, describes similar occasions: 'Be attentive, so that demons not deceive you by any vision…Who carries on with his prayer, even if he hears noise, knocking, shouts and swearing from demons, will not fall down.'[31] It is noteworthy that the term κστασις is used by the Studite in a negative sense, in contrast to the tradition of Dionysios and Maximos the Confessor, to which Symeon the New Theologian also belonged: for all three of them the term meant mystical rapture in God.[32]

Another case which is discussed by the Studite is what to do if someone comes when you are praying; you must interrupt your prayer, open the door, speak with him and console him: 'for the consolation of those who come is equal to reconciliation [with God]'.[33] This advice corresponds to what Klimakos says regarding the same circumstances: 'It often happens that we are standing at prayer, and brothers come to us, and we have to do one of two things, either to stop praying, or to grieve the brother by leaving him without answer. Love is greater than prayer, because prayer is a particular virtue but love embraces all the virtues.'[34] The Studite, however, suggests not to open the door to laymen but only to monks: with laymen one ought to speak after finishing prayer.[35] When the visitor leaves, one must pray about him with tears.[36]

Spiritual Direction and Confession

When entering the monastery, one must confess everything one has done since infancy to the spiritual father or the hegumen, as to God Himself, 'remembering how John baptised with the Baptism unto repentance and all came to

him, confessing their sins' (Matt. 3: 6).[37] **(p. 107)** The comparison between repentance and Baptism, as well as the theme of second Baptism (through tears or through mystical illumination), is traditional in ascetical literature: it occurs in Origen, Gregory the Theologian, the 'Makarian Homilies', John Klimakos, and other authors.[38] Another important thing is that the Studite in the passage quoted shows two possibilities for confession: one before the spiritual father and one before the hegumen. Let us examine this evidence more precisely.

As was shown in Chapter 1, confession before the hegumen was regarded as a norm in the Studite tradition. However, in exceptional cases it was permitted to have another spiritual father. As an example, let us refer to the *Typikon* of the monastery of St. Mamas (twelfth century?), which has a chapter entitled 'On the confession of the brothers, and that all must have the hegumen as their spiritual father'. The text prescribes confession before the hegumen, 'even if he is not a priest'. At the same time, if necessary, another spiritual father may be appointed to someone, yet not by one's own choice, but by the hegumen's decision. The text concludes with the following statement: 'But this, let us say at once, we have said with extreme condescension, since the traditions of the fathers do not give the subjects any right whatsoever not to have their hegumen as their spiritual father'.[39]

Now, Symeon the Studite recommends a monk to go for confession to one of the brothers, chosen by the monk himself and not by the hegumen. He emphasizes, though, that confession before the hegumen still remains the ideal:

> If you have obtained faith and trust in someone from among the brothers, so that you reveal before him your thoughts, never cease to go to him and confess thoughts which come to you every hour and day. Let everyone go to the hegumen for this purpose, but since some, by their great weakness and mistrust of the hegumen, avoid it, we allow this by condescension.[40]

We see that in this as in other matters the Studite was not a rigorist: referring to the rule, he allows exceptions. Possibly he had in mind his own situation when writing such a recommendation: he was a spiritual father of many people, among whom there was at least one monk, Symeon the younger.

(p. 108) Continuing, the Studite says that a monk must preserve trust in his spiritual father: 'even if you see that he fell into harlotry, do not be scandalized, because this will not harm you'. We must not pass from one spiritual father to another; otherwise neither the first nor the second of them will trust us:

> And we, having become accustomed to passing from one to another, will not cease to enquire about stylites, recluses, and hesychasts, and will not trust in anyone...[41]

One must regard one's spiritual father as a saint and not conceal from him any thought, the Studite emphasizes.[42] The obedience to the hegumen (spiritual father) must be absolute, 'right up to death, if he commands so'.[43] The revelation of thoughts must be done every day, and what is said by the spiritual father must be received with full confidence, 'as from God's mouth'; a monk should not ask someone else whether his spiritual father is right or wrong.[44]

These recommendations of the Studite reflect an understanding of spiritual fatherhood which is traditional for Eastern monasticism. We find similar recommendations in John Klimakos, Abba Dorotheos, and other masters of monastic life. Klimakos argues as follows against questioning one's spiritual father: 'The moment any thought of judging or condemning your superior occurs to you, leap away from it as from fornication.'[45] Dorotheos draws a portrait of his disciple Dositheos as an example of absolute obedience: he did not conceal any thought from the spiritual father, revealing them to him on every occasion.[46]

Apart from the revelation of thoughts, the Studite suggests daily self-accusation before sleep:

> When the day has finished and the evening has come, speak to yourself as follows: 'How, with God's help, have I spent this day? Perhaps, I condemned someone, or hurt, or scandalized, or killed [spiritually], or looked passionately at someone's face, or disobeyed the superior over work and neglected it, or was cross with somebody, or, when attending the office, occupied my mind with useless things, or, being oppressed by idleness, left the church and the office.'[47]

This is a kind of confession, but accomplished face to face with God. It was also advised long before the Studite by

Basil the Great: 'When **(p. 109)** the day has finished and every activity, both bodily and spiritual, has come to an end, before sleep, the conscience of everyone must be subjected to an examination in one's own heart.'[48] Dorotheos suggests that such self-accusation should be accomplished not only in the evening, but also in the morning and then every six hours.[49]

In the last chapters of the discourse the Studite provides some recommendations to the spiritual father concerning the direction of his disciples. These chapters demonstrate the practical mind of the Studite, his knowledge of the psychology of monks, and his skill in spiritual direction. The spiritual father must avoid, the Studite says, any thought of distrust towards his disciples, especially if they go for conversation to someone else.[50] If the disciple, in his turn, begins to distrust the spiritual father for any reason, such as jealousy of other disciples or false shame in revelation of thoughts, the father must recognize it by the expression on the disciple's face and by changes in his external appearance. 'The remedy for such [disciples] consists of assiduous prayers with tears, increase of love, frequent exhortation, bodily consolation and frequent conversations, sometimes gentle and sweet, and sometimes severe…'[51] Only the one who has tested these means in practice can write of them in such a manner. The mention of the 'bodily consolation' among other remedies is noteworthy: it shows the realism of the Studite as a spiritual director.

Discussing how to prevent two young monks from falling into so-called 'passionate love', the Studite suggests several means: to invite them separately from each other and speak to the one 'about many and different matters', mentioning among them 'particular friendship with someone'; and then, if there is no success, speak to the other about the first, 'scolding him and exposing him as a pervert and lover of flesh'.[52] This passage and especially the following two demonstrate, strange to say, the Studite's cunning, which he is likely to employ on some occasions:

> Add also the following: 'I have heard from some people that you have love for this [person], and, knowing both of you, I am sure that your love is spiritual. But so that others will not be scandalized…please do not speak and sit with him alone. Besides, the hegumen has a good impression about you and has the intention of ordaining you'…And he will reject this passion either for spiritual reasons, or because of the ordination, if he is possessed by the passion of vanity.[53]

(p. 110) In other words, our author suggests deceiving the disciple by promising him ordination. The Studite refers to such a 'remedy' as a common custom of the spiritual directors of his time:

> For there is a custom among spiritual fathers to give such promises of the ordination to young monks many times, in order to break the habit of passions.[54]

One can argue whether this is a good way to direct people, but it seems that the Studite was in favour of it. One would not find a similar recommendation in early monastic texts, which never encouraged a monk's desire to be ordained priest.[55]

Ascetical Practice

The first step of the monastic ladder, according to Klimakos, is renunciation of the world.[56] Since the term 'world' (*κόσμος*) means in this context 'the aggregate of the collective noun which is applied to separate passions',[57] the renunciation of it is in fact the combat against one's own passions, the mortification of one's own will. That is how the Studite understands it:

> Brother, perfect retirement from the world is the complete mortification of self-will, and then dispassion towards your own parents, relatives and friends, and renunciation of them. Besides, [it is necessary] to be stripped of all property…and forget all faces, which you used to love dearly, whether bodily or spiritually…[It is necessary] to bear in mind that after your entering into the cenobium all your parents and friends died, and to regard only God and the superior as father and mother.[58]

This passage is nothing else but a summary of the traditional monastic approach. Free will, which is what was given by God to people in the moment of creation, must be completely sacrificed **(p. 111)** through absolute obedience in order to obtain humility and other spiritual gifts. John Klimakos calls obedience 'a tomb of self-will and the resurrection of humility',[59] stating that 'blessed is he who mortifies his will to the end, and leaves the care of himself

to the director in the Lord; for he will be placed at the right hand of the Crucified.'[60] So the mortification of self-will is a kind of imitation of Christ, self-crucifixion, which includes the renunciation of everything that is dear to one.

The theme of renunciation of parents and relatives is also very typical of both ascetical literature and lives of saints. Klimakos is quite definite about this matter: 'Longing for God extinguishes longing for our parents, and so anyone who says he has both is deceiving himself...Do not be moved by the tears of parents and friends; otherwise you will be weeping eternally.'[61] The *Apophthegmata* contain a story about a monk who did not want to see his mother when she came from afar to visit him.[62] Isaac the Syrian tells us of one monk who did not leave his cell to see his brother, also a monk, even when the latter was dying.[63] To understand such an attitude, which might seem shocking according to our contemporary moral standards, one must take into consideration that monasticism is specifically a complete renunciation of what is dear, and is a literal following of the Gospel's claim: 'Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life' (Matt. 19: 29).

According to the Studite, a monk must be a stranger not only to his relatives and friends, but also to every brother of the cenobium;[64] he must not have a particular love for anyone, but must regard all the brethren as saints and love them equally.[65] This is again the traditional theme of *ξενιτεία*, the term which can be translated as 'pilgrimage' or 'exile', and which in monastic literature means 'living as a stranger'. Agathon in the *Apophthegmata* advised a monk who asked him how to live with brothers: 'Spend the whole time of your life among them as if it were the first day when you had just entered [the cenobium]. During the whole of your life keep *ξενιτεία*.'[66αα] Evagrios regards *ξενιτεία* as 'the first of luminous ascetical virtues'.[67] John **(p. 112)** Klimakos devotes chapter 3 of the 'Ladder' to *ξενιτεία*, emphasizing that a monk must live 'like one of foreign speech amongst people of another tongue' (*ἀλλόλωσσος ἐν ἑτερογλώσσις*).[68]

The Studite also follows his predecessors when insisting upon the necessity of non-possessiveness. A monk should not ask from the hegumen anything beyond what is permitted; he must have only one set of clothes, and in case he wants to wash them, he must ask some other monk to lend him clothes until his own dry.[69] If a monk's cell seems to become dilapidated, he can remind the hegumen about it, but if the latter does not allow him to change it, the monk should be pleased, 'remembering the Lord who had not where to lay His head' (Matt. 8: 20)'.[70] So non-possessiveness is also an imitation of Christ; according to the Studite, it must be absolute:

> It is not allowed to have in one's cell any material goods, not so much as a thread, except a mat, a sheep skin, a tunic and what you wear; if possible, [do not have] even a podium under your feet.[71]

There is a parallel in the 'Rule of Pachomios': 'No one should allow himself anything beyond what is permitted, either [another] set of clothes, or woollen bed clothes, or a sheep skin, or a prop under his head, or copper money, or anything for consolation.'[72] Therefore, when Symeon the Studite recommends a monk to have only one set of clothes, he is closer to the Pachomian rule than to the Studite tradition, since the Studite *Hypotyposis* suggests that each monk should have two sets of clothes.[73]

Several times the Studite mentions humility as an important ascetical virtue. One must do every good deed with humility, remembering the One Who said: 'When you shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which it was our duty to do' (Luke 17: 10).[74] A monk must feel as one worthless, unknown, and non-existent (cf. reference above).[75] Regarding all the monks as saints, one should consider oneself as a sinner and think that 'all will be saved, and only I myself will be condemned in the day [of the Last Judgement].'[76] This last phrase reminds us of the words of a certain tanner, who, according to some ancient monastic sources, repeated every day while passing through **(p. 113)** the town: 'All the people of this town...will go to the kingdom of heaven, and only I will go to eternal punishment for my sins.'[77]

The 'Ascetical Discourse' contains occasional suggestions concerning monastic food and drink. 'You may eat everything which is offered to you and also drink wine with abstinence,' the Studite recommends.[78] Especially when a monk is invited to a meal, he should eat everything indiscriminately.[79] One can mention that, though wine was in general a traditional drink and was even prescribed by monastic τυπικά, there was an opposition to drinking wine on the part of several ascetics, just as there was to attending baths and other 'bodily consolations' (see Chapter 1). Poimin said it was not allowed for monks to drink wine at all.[80] Makarios of Egypt, according to the *Apophthegmata*,

would drink wine if someone offered it to him, but on the next day he would not drink even water.[81] However, Varsanouphios and John allow monks to drink up to three cups of wine a day.[82]

The general rule which the Studite gives concerning food is the following:

> A monk should observe the three fasts [*τρεῖς τεσσαρατάςκοσ*]; during Great Lent [he must] fast with double intensity [*διπᾶς*], except on a great feast, Saturday and Sunday; during the other two fasts he should eat every other day [*παρὰ μίαν*]. During the year a monk should eat once a day on weekdays, except Saturday, Sunday and a feast, but not to his heart's content.[83]

In other words, the Studite prescribes eating twice a day only on weekends and feasts, once a day on weekdays during the whole year and on the weekends during Lent; during two long fasts a monk should eat every other day, and in Great Lent he should keep even more severe abstinence. If we compare this prescription with the Pachomian or Studite rules, it may seem more austere. Monks in *Pachomian koinonia* ate twice a day, except Wednesdays and Fridays, **(p. 114)** when there was presumably only one meal.[84] The Studite *Hypotyposis* also speaks of two meals, even on weekends during Lent; one meal is prescribed only on weekdays during Great Lent and Advent.[85]

Among other practical things, the Studite gives some advice about how to treat people on various occasions. If someone comes to a monk complaining about the superior, the monk should console him, saying that such things happened with him also many times.[86] If a monk is asked by his elder (καλόγηρος) about certain brothers, he should keep silence, and if the elder insists, answer with humility:

> 'Believe me, father, I do not know, because I am a private person;[87] I must look after my own negligence. All, by God's grace, are holy and good; however, everyone will reap as he has sown.'[88]

If one brother is ill and you have not visited him for a long time, before coming yourself send something as a gift to him, saying: 'Believe me, holy father, I only today learned about your illness and I ask you to excuse me.'[89]

Reference has already been made several times to the Studite's recommendation not to partake without tears. The following suggestion concerning Communion is also indicative:

> You should watch yourself and not receive Communion when feeling something against somebody, even if it is only an assault of thought, before you reach reconciliation through repentance.[90]

This corresponds to the 'Rule of Pachomios': 'The monk who feels hostility towards somebody…before love returns, is not worthy to receive in church either Christ's gift [the *ἀντίδωρον?*], or Communion.'[91]

We see that in his ascetical approach, as well as in his understanding of tears and prayer, the Studite in general adheres to the teaching of ancient monastic writers, especially John Klimakos, whereas in his **(p. 115)** understanding of spiritual direction he is particularly close to the Studite tradition. He was a practitioner and not a theoretician; this is why in his discourse practical themes predominated.

2. Development of Symeon the Studite's Ascetical Ideas by Symeon the New Theologian

Since the 'Ascetical Discourse' is just a collection of disconnected chapters, one cannot make a summary of the Studite's spirituality based on it. Neither can one expect to find there the whole spectrum of ascetical ideas which influenced Symeon. However, it is worth pointing out some features which were later developed by Symeon, who showed himself a faithful disciple and follower of his spiritual father. When discussing Symeon's eucharistic piety in Chapter 3, reference was made to *Cat*. 4, where Symeon developed the teaching of his spiritual father concerning Communion with tears. Apart from this striking example when the words of the Studite become a starting point for Symeon, there are other examples in which the closeness between the two Symeons seems to be quite considerable.

Symeon inherited from his teacher, and through him from the Studite tradition, the understanding of spiritual fatherhood as a relation between teacher and disciple based on absolute trust on both sides and absolute obedience on the disciple's part. The Studite argues against going to many advisers and searching for 'stylites, hermits, and wonderworkers', and suggests confession to the spiritual father only. Echoing him, Symeon says:

> Do not run searching for monks of renown, and do not scrutinize their life. If by the grace of God you have found a spiritual father, tell him alone your thoughts...[92]

The Studite identifies the words of the spiritual father with the words of God when declaring that the disciple should regard everything said by the spiritual father as if it came 'from God's mouth'. Symeon many times repeats that the disciple should 'account the words of his teacher as if they came from the mouth of God'.[93] All that the spiritual father orders should be regarded 'as if coming from God's mouth'.[94] The disciple should confess to the spiritual father all **(p. 116)** thoughts 'as if to God'.[95] Symeon also identifies the spiritual father's will with God's will:

> O Lord...send me a man who knows You, that by entirely submitting myself to his service as to Yours and by fulfilling Your will by doing his, I may please You, the only God...[96]

If the Studite says that the disciple should not judge his spiritual father even if he sees him 'fallen into harlotry', Symeon almost repeats the Studite when prescribing:

> If you see him eating with harlots and publicans and sinners, do not think anything passionate and human, but rather think of such things as are dispassionate and holy...With these thoughts see him condescending to human passions. Even if you see with your eyes, do not believe at all, for the eyes too make mistakes, as I have learned through experience.[97]

We see that Symeon slightly modifies the Studite's expressions: instead of 'falling into harlotry' he puts 'eating with harlots', which does not sound so sharp because of parallelism with the Gospel (cf. Matt. 9: n; Mark 2: 16; Luke 15: 2). It is noteworthy that Symeon refers to his 'experience' of seeing his spiritual father 'condescending to human passions', and confesses that his own eyes made mistakes. One may presume that he refers to the period of his life between 20 and 27, when he was not so close to the Studite. At least, this suggests that there must have been periods, whether short or long, when he doubted the holiness of his spiritual father.

The Studite refers to confession before the hegumen as a norm, but he also allows confession before one of the brothers, presumably, one of the simple monks and not necessarily a priest. Symeon also understands the service of the hegumen as first of all spiritual fatherhood;[98] however, Symeon is known as a writer who with particular zeal defended the right of non-ordained monks to be spiritual directors and to confess people.[99] There is no need to expound his theory of the power of 'binding and loosing', which, according to him, passed from bishops to priests and later to monks,[100] not necessarily **(p. 117)** ordained: this theory has been analysed by scholars many times.[101] What is important for us now is that in his resolute statement: 'We are allowed to confess to a monk who is not a priest...for this was granted from God to his heirs,'[102] Symeon is in accord with the Studite and with the monastic practice of his epoch.[103] The personality of the Studite, who was never ordained, stood always before Symeon's eyes as a living confirmation of this theory:

> I too was a disciple of such a father who had not received an ordination from men but who, through the hand of God, that is, the Spirit...enrolled me among [his] disciples...[104]

In his understanding of monastic life in general Symeon also comes very close to the Studite. Both regard monasticism as renunciation of oneself, which consists of mortification of self-will, deliberate deprivation of all property, renunciation of parents and friends, living as a stranger (*ξενιτεία*), humility, and abstinence. Symeon, of course, is more precise in discussing these themes simply because of the much greater volume of his literary legacy, but the correspondence in approach is clear. Only more or less direct parallels will be given below.

Whereas the Studite speaks of the complete mortification of self-will as a retirement from the world,[105] Symeon builds a whole theory of 'life-giving mortification' (*ζώοποιὸς νέκρωσις*) on this saying. After quoting literally the Studite's maxim, Symeon continues:

> O blessed voice, or rather blessed soul that was granted to become thus and to be separated from the world! It is to these and to those who are like them that Christ, our Lord, said: 'You are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world' (John 15:19)...Do you then, [brother], refuse to be humble and submissive, afflicted and dishonoured, despised and reproached...? But if [you refuse this], how, tell me, can you become alien to self-will?[106]

Symeon then calls his listeners to imitate his spiritual father, but, if they consider him 'a fool' (*μωρός*), to imitate Christ Himself.[107] **(p. 118)** According to Symeon, 'life-giving mortification' is deliberate death through the renunciation of self-will: without this one cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.[108]

The Studite, then, regards the deprivation of all property through its distribution to the poor as a necessary condition for the monastic life;[109] he also suggests that the monk, when he has washed his clothes, should ask for other clothes 'like a beggar and pilgrim'.[110] Symeon says that a monk should bring all his property to the spiritual father and not touch it any more, because from the beginning of his monastic life he must 'be and appear a beggar and pilgrim'.[111] Symeon goes even further when he calls all Christians and not only monks to distribute property and become beggars:

> He who loves his neighbour as himself (Luke 10: 27) does not allow himself to possess more than his neighbour; and if he possesses and does not distribute without jealousy, until he himself becomes a beggar…he has not fulfilled the Lord's commandment.[112]

It is worth reminding ourselves that Symeon not only called for distribution of property, but also put this ideal into practice, refusing his family inheritance when entering the Studite monastery.[113]

The Studite taught his disciples to renounce parents and friends, and to forget all faces which one used to love; instead of parents there must be only one's spiritual father (superior) and God.[114] Symeon followed this advice in practice, when he rejected his father's admonitions not to hurry to go to the monastery;[115] he also returned to this theme many times in his writings. In the 'Chapters' he summarizes the Studite's approach as follows:

> They who prefer in some respect their parents to Christ's commandment, have not obtained faith in Christ…Renunciation and perfect retirement from the world, accompanied by alienation from all worldly things, customs, opinions and faces, rejection of one's own body and will, in a short **(p. 119)** time will bring profit to the one who so hotly left the world…Seeing the sorrow of your parents, brothers and friends about you, laugh at the demon which by every means devises this against you. But retire with a great fear and much zeal, and ask God diligently that you may reach the silent harbour of a good [spiritual] father.[116]

In *Cat*. 7 Symeon compares attachment to relatives with a noose which the devil puts around the neck of a monk and by which he drives the monk into the abyss of despair.[117]

Symeon also develops the concept of ξενιτεία, which he understands as 'crucifixion unto the world' (Gal. *6*: 14) and 'the desire to be with God alone and the angels, and not to return to anything human'.[118] Following the Studite, who advised the monk not to go to anyone's cell, except the hegumen's,[119] Symeon writes:

> Keep silence and detachment from all things, for in this true *ξενιτεία* consists. Do not enter into the cell of anyone without the permission of your father in God, unless you have been sent by the superior…[120]

Let us notice that Symeon mentions two persons here, the superior and the spiritual father, which directly reflects his experience in the Stoudion, whereas Symeon the Studite is more likely to identify them.

The theme of humility, outlined by the Studite, was also developed by Symeon. After quoting his spiritual father's suggestion that the monk must be 'as one who does not exist',[121] Symeon exclaims in the manner in which he usually presents the Studite's sayings: 'O blessed words, through which his angelic life is proclaimed, which was above human life!'[122] Symeon understands humility as the imitation of Christ, Who humiliated Himself when people accused Him of being possessed by demons, a deceiver, a glutton, and a wine-bibber (Matt. 27: 63; John 7: 20; Matt. 11: 19). 'Our blessed father, I mean St. Symeon [the Studite], heard the same accusations on behalf of us, or rather because of us', Symeon adds.[123] Extreme humility when a man crucifies himself with Christ is nothing else but 'life-giving mortification', through which he becomes a partaker of Christ's glory.[124]

One may notice slight differences between Symeon and the Studite in some details of ascetical practice. As H. Turner points out, the **(p. 120)** Studite insists on coming to the church before all and leaving it last,[125] whereas Symeon recommends not leaving the church before dismissal (and so not necessarily last).[126] There is a difference between the Studite's order of all-night vigil[127] and Symeon's rule of evening prayer;[128] however, since the question concerns

dissimilar cases, one should not expect similarity. Such differences do not provide a sufficient basis to speak of Symeon's 'independence' from his spiritual father.[129] There are, of course, many ascetical themes in Symeon which have not been discussed by the Studite in his discourse, and there are many details which Symeon adds to the themes which have been touched upon. But even on the basis of these points we cannot speak of Symeon's independence, for nobody knows how many ascetical features were discussed by the Studite in conversations, as well as in any writings which have not survived.

3. The Mysticism of the Two Symeons Juxtaposed

Reference was made in Chapter 1 to the Studite's mysticism as it was testified to by Symeon. The 'Ascetical Discourse' gives us considerable proofs that the Studite was really a mystic with a deep personal experience. There is no systematic discussion of mystical matters in the discourse, but only several passages and remarks; however, they provide enough basis for us to state that the Studite was a direct predecessor of Symeon in this most significant aspect of the latter's spirituality. Let us collect these remarks, showing some parallels with Symeon the New Theologian, where applicable. (Parallels with other patristic writings are not provided at this stage, since all mystical themes are to be discussed in Chapter 10).

The following passage from the 'Ascetical Discourse' is of great importance:

> When remembrance of this [of God] remains in you for a long time, then in your mind appears a radiance like a ray. The more you search for it, with great attention and concentrated mind, with much effort and tears, the brighter it shines. Shining, it arouses love for itself; being loved, it purifies; purifying, it makes you godlike, enlightening and teaching you to distinguish between good and evil. However, O brother, there is need for much labour...so that this radiance settles in your soul and illuminates it, as the moon [illuminates] the darkness of night.[130]

(p. 121) In fact, the most significant mystical themes of Symeon the New Theologian are outlined in this passage by his spiritual father. The similarity in style and terminology is also considerable. Symeon also uses the images of the moon and of rays when describing the divine light.[131] The theme of the intense search for the divine light is very important for Symeon. He also speaks of different stages of contemplation; of the appearance of the light in the mind; of the love which the divine light causes; of tears which accompany the vision of light; of purification and deification as results of the contemplation of the divine light. Later each of these mystical features in Symeon will be discussed separately; at this stage it is important for us to see the resemblance between him and the Studite.

The next passage from the 'Ascetical Discourse' adds some details to the description of mystical vision: the latter is accompanied by spiritual joy, and it may be brought to an end voluntarily. The Studite says:

> But if in the time of prayer some other light begins to shine upon you, which I am not able to explain, [and because of which] the soul is filled with joy and desire for the best, and tears spring up with compunction, you should know that this is a divine visitation and assistance. But if it continues too long, direct your mind to something bodily...Through this action you will humiliate yourself.[132]

If we compare this passage with what Symeon the New Theologian usually says, we will see that the latter also speaks of divine joy with tears at the time of mystical vision. Like the Studite, Symeon speaks of a voluntary cessation of the vision in order to preserve humility[133]. In most cases, however, he describes this cessation not as a voluntary act, but as what is happening because of the extreme intensity of the experience: 'Being incapable of bearing the sight of such glory, I turned away, and I fled into the darkness of earthly **(p. 122)** pleasures...I preferred to go out [of the vision] and to remain in the tomb...'[134]

When speaking of tears in Symeon the Studite, it was mentioned that he regards tears as a means to mystical illumination. The connection between self-purification through repentance and mystical experience is emphasized in the following passage:

> 'It is necessary firstly to purify oneself, and then to converse with the Pure', as it is said.[135] For when the mind becomes purified because of many tears and receives the radiance of the divine light, which will not become less even if one possesses the whole world, then [a man] willingly settles his thoughts in the future and

> contemplates it, as God shows it to him; and he rejoices spiritually about it, according to the Apostle, who said: 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, meekness, temperance' (Gal. 5: 22–3).[136]

In Symeon's system mystical contemplation is also a result of self-purification through tears and repentance: 'For this unceasing repentance…little by little causes us to shed bitter tears and by them wipes away and cleanses the filth and defilement of the soul; then it produces in us pure repentance…and makes us able to see the unsetting radiance.'[137] It is noteworthy that the only patristic quotation in the 'Ascetical Discourse' is from Gregory Nazianzen, the author to whom Symeon refers much more often than to other church Fathers. The Studite shows that patience in afflictions may cause mystical experience:

> [Let us] every day be ready to bear every affliction, remembering that afflictions are deliverance from many debts…For that which 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man' (1 Cor. 2: 9) is, according to trustworthy promise, destined for those who show patience in afflictions…[138]

The same conception we find in Symeon. Those who bear patiently every difficulty and affliction will see 'the promised land', that is, divine light.[139] Symeon confirms this by his own experience: 'When I was in every difficulty and affliction…I saw in myself abundance of joy and happiness through the revelation and manifestation of His face.'[140] The reference to 1 Cor. 2: 9 in the 'Ascetical Discourse' is significant: it was one of Symeon's favourite passages, and in his writings he alludes to it over thirty times.

(p. 123) Having compared Symeon the Studite's ascetical and mystical approach with that of Symeon, we come nearer to understanding the reason why his influence on Symeon the New Theologian was so profound. It is not enough to say that 'his temperament, his methods as a spiritual father and the skills which he possessed were closely attuned to Symeon's needs.'[141] The Studite's methods of direction did indeed assist him in influencing people. But what was much more important for Symeon was that the Studite was a mystic who could share with the disciple his gifts and introduce him into mystical life. And, of course, Symeon the Studite's ascetical approach, which was discussed above, also influenced Symeon the New Theologian, though this should be put in second place.

Notes:

(1) Turner, *Fatherhood*, 65.

(2) *Asc.* 8.

(3) *Asc.* 24.

(4) *Asc.* 5.

(5) *Asc.* 16.

(6) *Asc.* 20.

(7) *Asc.* 19.

(8) *Asc.* 11.

(9) *Asc.* 23.

(10) *Asc.* 32.

(11) *Asc.* 9; cf. also 23.

(12) *Asc.* 11.

(13) *Asc.* 30.

(14) *Prayer* 5–6 [1168 D–1169 A]; cf. ibid. 78 [1184 C].

(15) *Ladder* 28 [1132B];28 [1137B];28 [1140 A].

(16) Ibid. 7 [801 D]; 7 [804 D]; 7 [808 D]; 7 [816 D].

(17) Ibid. 7 [801 C]: *χαροποιὸς πένθος*, 'joy-making mourning'; 7 [804 B]: *χαρμολύπη*, 'joyful sorrow'; cf. 7 [812 A].

(18) Ibid. 7 [808 B]; 8 [823 BC].

(19) Ibid. 7 [804 C].

(20) *Asc.* 20.

(21) *Chapt.* 32. 5 ff. [102].

(22) *Ladder* 20 [941 C].

(23) The monks in Egypt always worked without ceasing to practise meditation, according to John Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 2 [34]. Cf. the recommendation in *Verba seniorum* vii. 24 [897 C]: *labora manibus tuis et ora Deum incessanter* ('work with your hands and pray to God without ceasing'); cf. *Apophthegm.*, Loukios [253 BC]. Cf. Guillaumont, *Origines*, 125–6.

(24) *Cent.* 90 [321].

(25) *Asc.* 9.

(26) *Asc.* 16.

(27) *Asc.* 24.

(28) The service of the twelve psalms is one of the most ancient elements of monastic office; it existed in Egyptian monasteries already in 4th–5th centuries: see John Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 4–6 [20–2]. For Psalm 118/119 (*Μακάριοι ἄμωμοι ἐν ὁδῷ*) as part of the midnight office see chapter 3.

(29) *Asc.*20.

(30) *Asc.* 30.

(31) 94–7[1188 BD].

(32) Evagrios also used the term *ἔκστασις* in a negative sense: see the discussion of ecstasy in Symeon in chapter 10.

(33) *Asc.* 29.

(34) *Ladder* 26 [1028 B].

(35) *Asc.*29.

(36) *Asc.* 31.

(37) *Asc.* 3

(38) See the fuller discussion of this theme in chapter 9.

(39) Dmitriyevsky, *Opisanie* i. 1. 673; also 745 ff.; cf. Hausherr, *Direction*, 107.

(40) *Asc.* 35.

(41) *Asc.* 35.

(42) *Asc.* 21.

(43) *Asc.* 18.

(44) *Asc. 6.* The recommendation to go to the hegumen's cell only rarely (*Asc.* 9) implies that he was available in church every day.

(45) *Ladder* 4 [681 A].

(46) *L. Dosith*. [122–45].

(47) *Asc.* 5

(48) *Asc. Disc.* (40) 5 [881 A].

(49) *Disc.* 11. 117. 7–14 [364].

(50) *Asc.* 36.

(51) *Asc.* 37.

(52) *Asc.* 39.

(53) *Asc.* 39.

(54) *Asc.* 37.

(55) Cf. John Klimakos, *Ladder* 22 [952 B]: 'Do not take any notice when [the demon] suggests that you should accept bishopric, abbacy, and professorship.' In this respect one passage from Nikitas Stithatos concerning Symeon's life in the Studite monastery is remarkable: '[Evil people] invited him to suppers, drink parties, chatting, and to that which they considered respectable. And what is this? Offices, bright cells, and ordinations'; *Vie* 17. 12–15. In accordance with tradition and in contrast with the Studite, Nikitas counts the promise of ordination among monastic temptations, which were, however, successfully conquered by Symeon.

(56) *Ladder* 1 [632 A], title: *περὶ ἀποταγῆς βίου—literally, 'on renunciation of life'*. Cf. Dorotheos, *Disc.* 1, title [146].

(57) Isaac the Syrian, *Horn.* 30 [131] = *Syr. Hom.* 2 [18].

(58) *Asc.* 1; 2; 4.

(59) *Ladder* 4 [680 A].

(60) Ibid. 4 [704 D].

(61) Ibid. 3 [668 AB].

(62) Mark of Egypt 3 [296 BC].

(63) *Ep.* 1 [359] =*Syr. Hom.* 41 [312].

(64) *Asc.* 11.

(65) *Asc.* 10.

(66) Agathon 1 [109 A].

(67) *Evlog.* 2 [1096 B].

(68) *Ladder* 3 [665 C].

(69) *Asc.* 15.

(70) *Asc.* 21.

(71) *Asc.* 14.

(72) *Pachom. Rule* 25 [*Muséon* 37. 17].

(73) *Hypotyp.* 38 [*PG* 99, 1720 AB].

(74) *Asc.* 7.

(75) *Asc.* 19.

(76) *Asc.* 8.

(77) *Verba seniorum* 130 [785 CD]; cf. *Apophthegm.*, Anthony 24 [84 B]; cf. *Egypt. Solit.* 67[395].

(78) *Asc.* 25.

(79) *Asc.* 25 and 28.

(80) *Apophthegm.*, Poimin 19 [325 D]. Cf. Basil, *Asc. Disc.* (40). 4 [877 A]: wine as βδελυκτός ('vile') for monks.

(81) Makarios of Egypt 10 [268 AB]; cf. Chitty, *Desert*, 44.

(82) *Answers* 82–3 [72].

(83) *Asc.* 22. The three fasts mentioned are Great Lent (*ἡ μεγάλη τεσσακοστή*, seven weeks before Easter), Advent (forty days before Christmas), and the Fast of saints Peter and Paul (several days or weeks before their feast day, 29 June).

(84) Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 84–5.

(85) *Hypotyp.* 29 [*PG* 99, 1713 CD].

(86) *Asc. 26.*

(87) Greek *ἰδιώτης*.

(88) *Asc.* 38.

(89) *Asc.*27. This recommendation together with the advice to promise ordination to a young monk may suggest that the Studite admitted lies as a means for improving the situation in several circumstances. In connection with this it is not useless to quote here John Klimakos' quite paradoxical saying: 'When we are completely cleansed of lying, then we can occasionally resort to it, though with fear'; *Ladder* 12 [856 C].

(90) *ASC.* 12.

(91) *Chapt. Epit.*[Muséon 40. 61].

(92) *Eth.* 6. 399–402.

(93) *Cat.* 14. 16–17.

(94) *Eth.* 4. 153–4.

(95) *Hymn* 4. 27. Cf. *Cap.* 1. 28; 1. 55.

(96) *Eth*. 7. 437–44

(97) *Cat*. 20. 80–7.

(98) Especially when speaking of himself as hegumen, Symeon clearly states that his first duty is to 'examine actions and thoughts' of the monks: *Hymn* 14. 86.

(99) Cf. his *Ep*. 1. Cf. also the discussion in chapter 9 (section on the church hierarchy).

(100) *Ep*. 1. 12 ff. [120 ff.].

(101) See Holl, *Enthusiasmus*, 128–37; Krivochéine, *Light*, 131–40; Barringer, *Penance, passim*.

(102) *Ep*. 1. 11. 24–7 [119].

(103) R. Barringer indicates that during the century and a half preceding Symeon's *Ep*. 1the unordained confessors 'were beginning to think of their activities as being in some way a challenge to the episcopal power of binding and loosing': *Penance*, 201.

(104) *Ep*. 1. 16. 6–8 [127].

(105) *Asc*. 1.

(106) *Cat*. 6. 282–8.

(107) *Cat*. 6. 300–1.

(108) *Eth*. 11. 52–60.

(109) *Asc*. 2.

(110) *Asc*. 15.

(111) *Cap*. 1. 24–5.

(112) *Cap*. 3. 98. One wonders what was the reason for A. Kazhdan to ignore this text and suggest that Symeon treated the idea of alms with scepticism: 'one may, or may not, be merciful: this does not bring man nearer to salvation'; 'Zamechaniya', 13; cf. idem, 'Symeon' [*ODByz* 3, 1987]; cf. Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change*, 91–2.

(113) Cf. *Vie* 9. 1–2. However, we have no evidence that Symeon ever became a beggar in the literal sense. On the contrary, Nikitas mentions some books, clothes, and 'other things' which belonged to Symeon: *Vie 97*. 13–21. Symeon was not Francis of Assisi, and his call to all people to become beggars, then, must not be understood literally.

(114) *Asc*. 1–2; 4.

(115) *Vie* 8. 1–20.

(116) *Cap*. 1. 12–17.

(117) *Cat*. 7. 59–64.

(118) *Cap*. 1. 96.

(119) *Asc*. 9.

(120) *Cat*. 26. 77–81.

(121) *Asc*. 19.

(122) *Cat*. 6. 178–80.

(123) *Cat*. 6. 301–8.

(124) *Cat*. 6. 342–68.

(125) *Asc*. 17.

(126) Turner, *Fatherhood*, 159; cf. *Cat*. 26. 60–2.

(127) *Asc*. 24.

(128) *Cat*. 26. 272–85.

(129) Turner, *Fatherhood*, 158.

(130) *Asc*. 20.

(131) Cf. the image of the moon in *Hymn* 29. 9. It should be noted that the image of the moon occurs in Symeon very rarely: he definitely prefers to speak of the sun when describing the divine light. If Symeon the New Theologian speaks of a ray, the question is usually about an incomplete vision: e.g. in *Cat*. 22. 314–18, describing the second vision of the young George, he says that it was 'a small ray of that most sweet and divine light', which appeared to him 'in some dim fashion'. In *Hymn* 23. 244–9 he describes a partial vision of the divine light as follows: For it is the ray that I see, but the sun I do not see…Seeing the ray, I desire to see completely its Originator.' The Studite also refers to a ray when describing the first stage of the vision: he says that at the next stages the shining becomes brighter.

(132) *Asc*. 30.

(133) *Cat*. 17. 65–7.

(134) *Hymn* 11. 81–9.

(135) Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc*. 20. 4. 8–9 [62].

(136) *Asc*. 32.

(137) *Cat*. 4. 670–7.

(138) *Asc*. 13.

(139) *Cat*. 6. 140–2.

(140) *Eth*. 10. 285–8.

(141) Turner, *Fatherhood*, 65.

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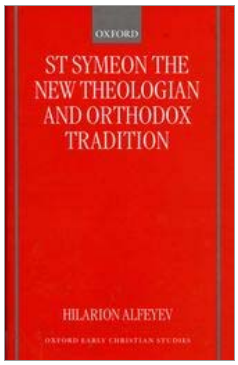

St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition
Hilarion Alfeyev

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Symeon the New Theologian and the Patristic Tradition of the Orthodox Church

Source: St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition

(p. 126) In the following chapters Symeon's attitude to preceding church writers will be discussed in order to define his place in the centuries-old patristic tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Our task here is not to go through patristic texts just in order to add more parallels to those found by other scholars (though many will be added in the course of the discussion). These chapters will re-examine and summarize the accumulated evidence on Symeon's patristic background, pointing out the most significant items of resemblance and difference between him and preceding Fathers.

After some necessary remarks concerning what Symeon read or could have read in general, his way of quoting from and alluding to the Fathers will be looked at. The study will then proceed by discussing how Symeon is influenced by hagiographical literature and how he develops concepts which he has inherited from earlier theological literature. Separate chapters will be devoted to Symeon's anthropology and ecclesiology. The discussion of the most important ascetical and mystical themes of Symeon, in comparison with earlier authors, will conclude the survey.[1]

Notes:

(1) The methodological division of patristic literature into theological, ascetical, and mystical does not correspond to how the Fathers would themselves regard their works: both Gregory 'the Theologian' and Mark 'the Ascetic', as well as the majority of other church Fathers, were in fact theologians, ascetics, and mystics at the same time. It is only modern scholarship that tends to classify Fathers according to the predominating themes of their writings.

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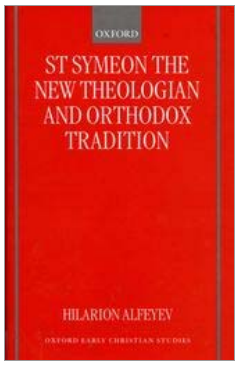

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Symeon and the Cycle of his Daily Reading

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Hilarion Alfeyev

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Abstract and Keywords

Symeon the New Theologian lived in an epoch when books were rare and extremely expensive, but was nevertheless surrounded by books during the whole of his life. Apart from listening to scriptural, ascetical, and hagiographical readings in the church, Symeon used to read books privately. There were several libraries available to Symeon in different periods of his life, including one owned by his parents in the village of Galati and the Studite library. Of course, the Bible occupied the first and most prominent place in Symeon's daily cycle of reading. Nikitas Stithatos several times mentions that Symeon devoted some time every day to the reading of Scripture, and Symeon himself emphasizes the necessity of daily reading of it. Nikitas indicates that Symeon constantly read ‘the lives of ancient ascetics’. Hagiographical literature was in fact the favourite reading of Byzantine people; and indeed in the monasteries the lives of prominent monastic saints were particularly widely read. Surprisingly, Symeon very rarely refers to ascetical literature, which he must have known quite well.

Keywords: Symeon the New Theologian, reading, libraries, Bible, Scripture, Nikitas Stithatos, hagiographical literature, monasteries, ascetical literature

1. The Evidence on What Symeon Could Have Read. Patristic Allusions and Quotations in Symeon

Symeon lived in an epoch when books were rare and extremely expensive.[2] In spite of this, during the whole of his life he was surrounded by books. Apart from listening to scriptural, ascetical, and hagiographical readings in the church, he used to read books privately.

There were several libraries available to Symeon in different periods of his life. First of all, his parents in the village

of Galati possessed a library, to which Symeon must have had access until he was eleven; after his removal to Constantinople he could also occasionally use this library: there he borrowed the 'Ladder' by John Klimakos when he was twenty.[3] When living in Constantinople, Symeon, who, according to Nikitas, 'zealously devoted himself' (*ἐπεμέλετο*) to reading,[4] might have borrowed books from his spiritual father: at least once this actually took place, when the elder gave him the book by Mark and Diadochos.[5] The richest monastic library in the Byzantine world, the Studite library,[6] was available to Symeon only for the short time of his novitiate in this monastery. In St. Mamas Symeon himself organized the library.[7] Besides, Symeon possessed his own books: this is clear from one of Nikitas' remarks.[8]

(p. 128) Of course, the Bible occupied the first and most prominent place in Symeon's daily cycle of reading. Nikitas several times mentions that Symeon devoted some time every day to the reading of Scripture,[9] and Symeon himself emphasizes the necessity of daily reading of it.[10] The Bible was an object of continual study and contemplation (*μελέτη*) for him, as it has been for all Christian generations.

The probable cycle of Symeon's non-scriptural reading in the cell is difficult to reconstruct. Symeon is not an author who constantly refers to what he has read and his rare quotations from or allusions to the Fathers help to illuminate his patristic background only to a small degree. There are some occasional notices on what Symeon had read in the 'Life of Symeon' by Nikitas, but they also supply us with a very little information.

Nikitas indicates that Symeon constantly read 'the lives of ancient ascetics'.[11] Hagiographical literature was in fact the favourite reading of Byzantine people; and indeed in the monasteries the lives of prominent monastic saints were particularly widely read. As we shall see, Symeon was familiar with this kind of literature: some fifteen times he refers to the lives of saints,[12] among whom there are bishops, patriarchs, martyrs, holy monks, and holy women (see below).

Symeon was to a certain degree familiar with the canonical literature of the Eastern Church. He several times refers to 'the apostolic canons and rules (traditions)' in *Cat*. 18,[13] and to 'the sacred canons' in *Cat*. *27*.[14] B. Krivocheine suggests that Symeon in *Cat*. 18 speaks of the so-called 'Apostolic Constitutions', the collection of eighty-five rules attributed to the Apostles but probably written in the fourth century.[15] This might well be the case, especially if we take into consideration the fact that these rules formed the nucleus of Byzantine canon law and were very well known. However, Symeon's references are too general to suggest any particular interest in specific works of canonical literature on his part.

With regard to theological and dogmatic literature, Symeon seems to be familiar with many writings of this kind. He alludes to the theological **(p. 129)** classics of the fourth century, especially Gregory Nazianzen, who is his favourite writer (twenty-nine quotations and one allusion),[16] and John Chrysostom (some fifteen possible quotations and allusions); Basil the Great is quoted with less frequency (three quotations and several possible allusions).[17] There are also a few reminiscences from Gregory of Nyssa, Maximos the Confessor, and Dionysios the Areopagite; however, none of these authors is quoted by Symeon directly.[18]

Surprisingly, Symeon very rarely refers to ascetical literature, which he must have known quite well. We have learned from Nikitas that Symeon read John Klimakos, Mark the Ascetic, and Diadochos when he was still a layman.[19] In spite of this fact, there are only two direct quotations from the 'Ladder' in Symeon,[20] three from Mark and not one from Diadochos.[21] Moreover, the three quotations from **(p. 130)** Mark are joined together in one autobiographical passage,[22] and nowhere else does Symeon refer to this author. Symeon was familiar with the 'Sayings of the Desert Fathers' (*Apophthegmata patrum*), but he alludes to them only on a few occasions.[23] Several times he refers to his spiritual father Symeon the Studite, but he never quotes directly from Theodore the Studite,[24] though he certainly depends on this author in many aspects of his teaching: some parallels have already been indicated.

There are two mystical writers, whose doctrines are close to Symeon in many respects: Makarios of Egypt and Isaac the Syrian. Neither of them is quoted by Symeon directly, though there are obvious parallels between him and these two authors: some will be pointed out below. As to the 'Makarian Homilies', there was a strong influence from them on Symeon, according to K. Ware[25] B. Krivochéine **(p. 131)** observed an evident resemblance between the Makarian 'Great Letter' (ascribed also to Gregory of Nyssa)[26] and the beginning of Symeon's *Cat*. 34.[27] However, as W. Völker

points out, there is no proof that Symeon knew Makarian corpus as a whole.[28] The 'Homilies' by Makarios were in fact quite well known and appreciated in monastic circles of Symeon's time, so it is not surprising if he had read them. 'Even if Symeon had for any reason not read the homilies by Makarios,' B. Fraigneau-Julien suggests, 'he knew the direction of thought to which they belonged, and he himself was close to this direction.'[29]

The closeness between Symeon and Isaac the Syrian was noticed already in the Hesychast period.[30] However, there is no direct textual proof of Symeon's acquaintance with the writings of Isaac, though it would have been quite natural for Symeon to have read them.[31] In fact, the Greek translation of the ascetical homilies of Isaac was made in Palestine at the end of the eighth or the beginning of the ninth century.[32] This collection also included, under the name of Isaac, four homilies by the eighth-century Syriac mystic John of Dalyatha.[33] Two centuries (until the beginning of the eleventh, when **(p. 132)** Symeon lived) were quite enough for the translation to spread outside the Palestinian area and become known in Constantinople. In the mid-eleventh century, soon after the death of Symeon, Paul of Evergetis included the writings of Isaac the Syrian into his anthology of ascetical texts, the *Evergetinos*: this means that by this time Isaac's writings had obtained in Constantinople the necessary authority to be quoted side by side with Diadochos, John Klimakos, and other great masters of Eastern asceticism.

Before turning to an analysis of patristic parallels to Symeon let us make clear two particular points. We usually speak of what a certain Byzantine author might have read deriving from quotations and parallels we find in his own writings. We must, however, always take into account that there existed many florilegia, collections of passages by different authors joined together in one volume: the *Evergetinos* by Paul may serve as a good example of such a florilegium.[34] So if a certain author alludes to some passages from, say, Maximos the Confessor, it does not necessarily mean that he has read Maximos: he might well be familiar with one of the florilegia and cite from it. And indeed if one quotes from a certain discourse by Gregory Nazianzen, it does not mean that one knows all other discourses by this writer.

Apart from florilegia, which circulated widely among the monks, another important source by means of which Byzantine monks could become acquainted with a wide range of literature, was the church office. In the case of Symeon, almost all pieces of literature which are quoted by him belong to the cycle of reading in the church: this is true of the lives of the famous saints, the 'Ladder' by John Klimakos, the festal orations by Gregory Nazianzen. So it is not always clear where the limits of the influence of liturgical worship are and where we can speak of 'reading in the cell'.

2. Symeon and Hagiographical Literature

Ancient Saints as Examples for Imitation

As has been mentioned, it was Theodore the Studite who emphasized the importance of being familiar with the lives of saints.[35] **(p. 133)** According to Theodore, everyone gains great profit when reading hagiographical literature:

> I think, even stones feel this profit, not to speak of a rational human being. From this [reading] the mind of a man is illuminated, rejecting the darkening 'fleshly wisdom' (Rom. 8: 6–7), and his soul becomes contrite and ascends to divine love[36]

These words reflect the common Byzantine attitude to hagiographical literature, reading of which was regarded as an important means to salvation.

The writings by Symeon indicate that he was 'sufficiently familiar with a good many examples of hagiography'.[37] Following Theodore the Studite, he also suggests that monks should read the lives of ancient ascetics and try to imitate them.[38]

Several times he retells famous lives of saints, giving his own interpretation to hagiographical subjects. One such example is the well-known 'Life of Anthony', ascribed to Athanasios of Alexandria: it is reflected in *Cat.* 6, where Symeon raises the very important question of how far his own experience of the vision of God corresponds to the experience of ancient saints. Symeon's idea is that Anthony also had a mystical vision of God; to prove it, Symeon retells his life:

> What then did the great Anthony do while he sat in the tomb...? Was he not completely dead to the world, and, as he lay in the tomb, was he not seeking God, Who was able to give him life and raise him up?[39]

Ascetical deeds of Anthony are enumerated, as they are described in his 'Life': he ate only bread and water and struggled against demons[40] But the goal of all these efforts was to become worthy to see Christ:

> If he...had not persevered to the end (Matt. 10: 22)...he would not have been found worthy of the vision of the Master, for which he longed, nor would he have heard His sweet voice...Since he died in will for Christ, as we have said, he lay as one dead, until Christ came, Who gives life to the dead and Who raised him up from hell...and brought him out into the wondrous light of His countenance (1 Pet. 2: 9). When he saw this and was set free from those sufferings, he was filled with joy and said: 'Lord, where were You until now?'[41]...By saying 'until now' he showed that he had attained to the vision and awareness and knowledge of the Master's presence[42]

(p. 134) Symeon definitely regards this vision of the divine light as the culmination of the whole life of the great ascetic.[43] It is not surprising that Symeon was moved by this episode. Anthony, according to the author of his 'Life', during the mystical vision 'saw that the roof of his house somehow opened, and a ray of light descended upon him'; then he heard the voice of the Lord, Who said to him: 'I was always here.'[44] Symeon had similar visions of the light which descended in his cell 'without opening the heavens...or the roof of the house,'[45] and heard the voice of Christ saying: 'I am here' (*Ἐγώ εἰμι*).[46] Therefore, in retelling Anthony's life Symeon in fact implies his own story.

When speaking of another ancient ascetic, Arsenios, Symeon recalls how he forsook palaces and kings, arrived at the monastery 'as a beggar', humbled himself before the hegumen, did heavy bodily labour, constantly wept, spent nights in prayer, 'and persevered to the end in lowliness and poverty'.[47] Why did he do all this? Symeon asks:

> That he might himself experience and see the same thing that the great Anthony was granted to see and experience. Why then is it not recorded that he too saw the Lord? Was it that, after all his efforts, he was not found worthy to see the Lord? Not at all! He also was granted to see God, even though the narrator did not make this clear.[48]

We see how Symeon gives his own personal interpretation of a hagiographical subject: each saint must have seen God, even if this is not indicated in his life. Symeon then suggests how to find out that Arsenios had mystical experience: If you want to make sure of it, go over the chapters which he...composed, and you will know from them that he also truly saw God.'[49] In other words, one must not **(p. 135)** limit oneself to reading the life of a particular ascetic, but should try-to find other sources or perhaps the authentic writings of this saint, if they exist, in order to clarify the true image of him.

However, the true meaning of hagiographical literature, according to Symeon, is not open to everyone who reads it, but only to those who try to imitate the saints. The compilers of the lives of saints, Symeon suggests,

> described their bodily efforts, their non-possessiveness, fasting, vigils, abstinence, patience...but they hardly described their spiritual activity except as mirrored in such deeds, that those who show their labours and their faith by deeds may by these deeds in knowledge participate in the spiritual gifts of saints, while the others will not be counted worthy even to hear of such things.[50]

So in hagiographical literature, as in Scripture, there is also a certain *θεωρία* (internal meaning) which is revealed to 'gnostics' who imitate the saints and is hidden from 'others' who do not imitate them. Symeon definitely regards himself as such a 'gnostic' and this is why he thinks he has a right to interpret the lives of saints in a personal way, clarifying their hidden mystical meaning.

Developing the theme of the imitation of saints, Symeon in fact follows Theodore the Studite who suggests that 'we must not only admire saints, but also imitate them with good sense: that is, let the cenobite imitate a cenobitic saint; the hesychast, a saintly hesychast; the hermit, the saint who is a hermit; the hegumen, a saintly hegumen.'[51] In *Cat.* 5 Symeon gives a description of the Last Judgement and suggests that people will be condemned if they were not familiar with the lives of saints and did not imitate them:

> [Christ] says to the women: 'Have you not heard in the churches the readings of the "Life of St. Pelagia, the Former Harlot", the "Life of St. Mary of Egypt, the Former Profligate", [the "Life of] Theodora the Adulteress, Who Became a Wonderworker", as well as [the "Lives of] Euphrosyni the Virgin, Called Smaragdos", and "Xeni, the True and Wonderful Stranger"...? Why have you not imitated those and similar women...?'[52]

(p. 136) Correspondingly, men who are kings and rulers will be asked why they did not imitate the Old Testament saints, such as David, who, after being reproved by Nathan, 'did not cease day and night from weeping and lamenting', as well as Moses, Joshua, and many virtuous 'kings, rulers, and commanders'.[53] To the patriarchs Christ will oppose John Chrysostom, John the Almsgiver, Gregory the Theologian, Ignatios, Methodios, and Tarasios; and against the metropolitans He will set Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory the Wonderworker, Ambrose, and Nicholas.[54] Rich people will be judged by those who were rich, and the poor by those who were poor; married by those who were married, and unmarried by those who lived unmarried. In short, on the awesome day of Judgement every sinful man will see [a saint] who is like him...and will be judged by this [saint].'[55]

Contemporary Saints

Another theme of Theodore the Studite which received particular development in Symeon is that 'We should imitate not only ancient saints but also those who are from our own brotherhood.'[56] Symeon always had before him an example of such a 'living and shining saint' in the person of his spiritual father Symeon the Studite. The question of the veneration of the Studite was exactly the reason for Symeon's conflict with the church authorities which ended with his exile from the Byzantine capital.[57]

But it was not only Symeon the Studite whom Symeon the New Theologian would regard as a living saint. He devoted the whole *Cat*. 21 to a certain Anthony, a young monk who died after a few years of **(p. 137)** monastic life: the discourse is designed as a funeral laudation and reminds us of some bright examples of hagiographical literature, such as the 'Life of Dositheos' by Dorotheos of Gaza.[58] Symeon compares here the last words of Anthony with those of ancient saints:

> 'Why do you weep, brother?' he said. I have not denied my faith in God, but I have kept it [cf. 2 Tim. 4: 7]...And from the time when I came to this monastery...I have not committed any fleshly sin. Yet as I ate and drank I have spent my days in negligence. But I commend myself to the loving-kindness of God Who knows everything, and knows what He will do with me, the humble one.' What more is to be found in the last words and sayings of the great Fathers than in those of our brother? He frankly revealed to us his purity and virginity, while his soul kept...humility.[59]

The death of Anthony is described by Symeon in the following passage:

> Having stretched out his feet [*τοὺς πόδας ἐξάρας*] and arranged his hands in the form of a cross, with an untroubled state and feeling of soul, he fell asleep in profound peace in most gentle sleep; and he slept the sleep of the righteous, without showing any attachment to worldly things. He did not remember his relatives, nor did he mention any friend in this life; he gave no instructions about any corruptible thing...but, having been denuded of all desire and attachment to visible things, he passed to the intelligible kingdoms.[60]

Some expressions in this narration directly correspond to the description of the death of Anthony the Great, who, according to his 'Life', also 'stretched out his feet' [*ἐξάρας τοὺς πόδας*] and fell asleep in peace and joy[61] But one detail is certainly in contrast: Anthony gives precise instructions concerning how to divide his clothes among bishops and disciples after his death, whereas the hero of Symeon's discourse did not 'give instructions about any corruptible thing'. For Symeon the peaceful and saintly death of his friend seems to be even more convincing than the death of the ancient ascetic: at least it was so when he delivered his funeral laudation to Anthony. He finishes with an appeal to other monks 'to imitate his faith, his struggles, his confession, and his repentance'.[62]

Therefore Symeon does not see any difference between ancient and canonized saints on the one hand, and his saintly contemporaries **(p. 138)** on the other. One can say that he is interested in the lives of ancient saints only as far as they correspond to his own experience, to the experience of his epoch and his surroundings. As was pointed out in Chapter 1, Symeon was in strong opposition to the tendency towards 'archivization' of saints, which was becoming characteristic of Byzantine official church circles in the tenth and eleventh centuries and was connected with the

completion of the Metaphrastic corpus. Symeon considered such an attitude to saints as heresy and blasphemy, and many times spoke out against any kind of nostalgia for the glorious past of the Church:

> There are many who say every day…'Were we living in the days of Apostles and of Christ, and like them had been found worthy of seeing Him, we too would have become holy like them'…Others, who are more serious, say: 'Had we lived in the times of the holy Fathers, we too would have struggled…But now we live among slack and careless people, and we are led astray by them and unwillingly perish with them'…[63]

In fact, Symeon argues, we are in a much better situation than all the ancient saints. Those who lived in the time of Christ could see Him only as a humble and insignificant man, who ate with publicans and sinners, and it was surprising if anyone recognized Him as God; but now He is proclaimed and glorified as God through over the world, and kings and nations are venerating Him.[64] In the time of the holy Fathers it was also much worse than now, since there were many heresies, many false christs, false Apostles, and teachers: remember how many troubles befell Saints Anthony, Savvas, Euthymios, Stephen the Younger, and especially Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and John Chrysostom.[65]

However, continues Symeon, 'though the past was terrible, yet even now life has many heretics, many wolves, vipers, and serpents, who are living among us'.[66] Thus who are they? Having mentioned **(p. 139)** Arius, Makedonios, Sabellios, Apollinarios, Nestorios, and other ancient heretics, Symeon says that it is not about any of them that he is speaking:

> But the people of whom I am speaking and whom I call heretics are those who say that there is no one in our times and among us who is able to keep the Gospel's commandments and become like the holy Fathers…to receive the Holy Spirit and to see the Father through Him and through the Son. Now those who say that this is impossible have not fallen into one particular heresy, but into all of them, because this one surpasses and covers them all in abundance of impiety and blasphemy…Those who say such things close the heaven which Christ opened for us…While He claims: 'Come unto me, all that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' (Matt. 11:28), these enemies of God (*ἀντίθεοι*) or rather antichrists (*ἀντίχριστοι*) say: 'It is impossible, impossible!'[67]

The scholion to this passage by one commentator of the fourteenth century says: 'He [Symeon] implies those bishops who told him such things, the Patriarch Sergios, Stephen of Alexini, and like-minded people.'[68] It is they whom he called antichrists and to whom he directed the edge of his polemics. Having inherited from Symeon the Pious and Theodore the Studite, and through them from monastic tradition, the understanding of sanctity as something to which all Christians are called, Symeon found that in official circles of his Church this understanding was tending to become completely lost and he decisively spoke out against this tendency.

Nikitas Stithatos constantly draws a parallel between Symeon's struggle for the veneration of his spiritual father and the struggle of iconodules for the veneration of icons. The images of Christ were understood by the defenders of icons, such as John of Damascus and Theodore the Studite, as a living testimony to the Incarnation of God, who took upon Himself human flesh and transfigured it; and so iconoclasm was regarded as a rejection of the Incarnation of God, 'a disrespect for the mystery of God-manhood'.[69] Correspondingly the icons of the Holy Virgin and saints testified that the human being **(p. 140)** after the Incarnation was capable of being transfigured and deified; and iconoclasm in fact denied the concept of deification.[70] Behind the iconodules was the whole of living Christian tradition, which developed over several centuries and was kept by the people, whereas iconoclasm did not correspond to this tradition, even though some scriptural, mainly Old Testament, texts were found in its support,[71] which were in this case only dead letters.

But was the conflict between Symeon and his opponents not in fact the continuation of this protracted argument? Was he not one of those bearers of tradition who attempted to prove by his writings and life that the initial Christian ideal of sanctity was still alive in his time? Only the accent in the argument had been removed from the veneration of icons to the veneration of saints,[72] but the nature of conflict was still the same as in the iconoclastic epoch: those who regarded themselves as defenders of tradition[73] were in fact defending its formalization and corruption, while the monk who belonged to tradition by upbringing defended its true and original meaning.

We should always avoid schematic generalizations and hasty conclusions: perhaps it would be rather mistaken to put Stephen of Nikomidia and other representatives of the 'official Church' of Symeon's time on the same level as the iconoclasts and to liken Symeon the New Theologian to the great confessors of iconodulia. However, there is some truth in such a comparison, especially if we remember how Nikitas Stithatos describes the campaign against the cult of Symeon the Studite, which was organized by Stephen:

> Strengthened by the support of the synkellos and the Patriarch, the enemies stole the icon of St. Symeon the Studite and brought it to the Patriarch's **(p. 141)** palace. Symeon was called to the Patriarch, to whom he said: T have not done anything alien to the tradition of the Fathers and Apostles [*παραδόσει τῶν πατέρων καὶ ἀποστόλων*] because it was they who recommended us to paint images of our holy Fathers and to venerate and kiss them.' To confirm this, Symeon referred twice to John of Damascus,[74] and appealed to his late spiritual father: 'O saint Symeon, you became like an icon of our Lord Jesus Christ through participation in the Holy Spirit! Give me strength to suffer for you and your icon, or rather for Christ Himself...!' And what happened then? They sent people to destroy icons of the saintly elder, just as the holy icons were destroyed in the time of Copronymos.[75]

We see that for Nikitas, as well as for Symeon, the campaign against the cult of Symeon the Studite seemed to be a kind of 'new iconoclasm'. Symeon certainly considered himself as a defender of the 'tradition of the holy Fathers and Apostles' and his struggle against Stephen and the Synod as suffering for Christ. For him the denial of the sanctity of his spiritual father was equivalent to a refusal of the idea of sanctity in general, and so of the concept of the deification of man. Symeon the Studite, according to Symeon the New Theologian, 'possessed Christ completely, and was completely Christ';[76] therefore any disrespect to him became in his eyes a blasphemy against Christ.

Only in the context of this dramatic conflict can some extremes in Symeon's teaching be understood, which shocked his contemporaries and which will be touched upon in later sections. The sharp contraposition of 'ordination from people' to 'ordination from the Holy Spirit',[77] that is, of 'earthly' church hierarchy to the hierarchy of the saints, which is characteristic of Symeon's teaching, is also due to this unfortunate but perhaps providential conflict. Symeon was undoubtedly not against the hierarchical principle in the Church in general, but his historical function as the defender of tradition put him in opposition to official high clergy of his time and forced him to pay more attention and respect to those whom he thought to be the successors of the ancient saints.

This living succession of spiritual experience, that is, the continuity of saintly life from the early Church up to the present time, was what Symeon would constantly speak about. The following passage from his 'Chapters' concerning the 'golden chain' of saints may serve **(p. 142)** as a summary of his attitude to the phenomenon of Christian sanctity in general:

> The Holy Trinity, pervading everyone from first to last, from head to foot, binds them all together...The saints in each generation, joined to those who have gone before, and filled like them with light, become a golden chain, in which each saint is a separate link, united to the next by faith, works, and love. So in the One God they form a single chain which cannot easily be broken[78]

Notes:

(2) N. Wilson argues that a manuscript of 300 to 400 folia would have cost in the 9th century (i.e. one or two centuries before Symeon) about 15 to 20 nomismata: see his article in *Byzantine Books*, 3 ff. For comparison we can recall that in the 10th century the average annual salary of a Byzantine office employee was about 40 nomismata, and even a *protospatharios* earned only 72 nomismata a year: Mango, *Image*, p. vii, 38–9.

(3) See Vie 6. 21–3.

(4) Vie 4. 14–15.

(5) Vie 4. 15–16.

(6) For its description see Eleopoulos, *Βιβλιοθήκη*, 11–56.

(7) Vie 24. 19–20. When organizing a library, Symeon followed the tradition which derived from Theodore the

Studite and his uncle Plato, as well as from early monasticism (see Chapter 1). There is an interesting parallel to Symeon in another 11th-century hegumen, Christodoulos of Patmos; the latter also organized a rich library in his monastery, having collected, copied, or bought many manuscripts: see Ware, 'Christodoulos', 32–3.

(8) See Vie *97*. 20.

(9) See *Vie* 26. 20; 27. 14; 28. 5; 62. 11.

(10) See Chapter 2.

(11) *Vie* 26. 20–1.

(12) Here and below the statistics are borrowed (as with biblical statistics in Chapter 2) from *SC* indices and from Turner, *Fatherhood*, 45–51.

(13) Cf. *Cat*. 18. 512; 526; 536; 540–1; 552–3.

(14) Cf. *Cat*. 27. 201.

(15) *SC* 104, 306–7 (n. 1). Cf. also Symeon's references to the *Apost. Const*, in his polemic with the Patriarch Sergios: *Vie* 83. 8–23.

(16) The influence of Gregory's theology on Symeon will be considered in later sections. Here it should be pointed out that Gregory was among the very few authors who exerted literary influence on Symeon. In particular, Symeon's 'Hymn 5' (Alphabet in Verses) is an imitation of Gregory's *Poes. moral*. 30 [908 A–910 A]: both are written with an alphabetical acrostic. There is also a certain literary parallelism between Symeon's 'Beatitudes' in *Eth*. 10. 778–867 and Gregory's *Poes. moral*. 17 [781 A–786 A].

(17) Note the difference between Symeon and Theodore the Studite, for whom monastic writings by Basil the Great were his favourite reading: see L. Theod. Stud. 13 [128 C]. Theodore often refers to Basil the Great, and even regards himself as a 'defender of St. Basil's commandments': *Gr. Cat*. I. 38.

(18) Some parallels between the three authors listed and Symeon have been indicated by J. Fraigneau-Julien: see Sens, 44–56, 79–92, 171–81. Before this J. Hussey suggested that Symeon 'was especially influenced' by the writings of Maximos the Confessor: *Learning*, 202. W. Volker also indicated some traces of Maximos' influence on Symeon: *Praxis*, 266–7, 270–2. However, it would be difficult to find textual proofs of Symeon's dependence on Maximos. As to the Areopagite, the opinions of scholars concerning his influence on Symeon are different. Some scholars deny the possibilityof direct influence: see Holl, *Enthusiasmus*, 98; Bouyer, *Histoire*, 673, Krivocheine, 'Zealot', 117. Others are more positive concerning the Areopagite's influence on Symeon; in particular W. Volker expresses his disagreement with the conclusions of the above mentioned scholars, while recognizing that 'Symeon's attitude to the Areopagite is disputed': *Praxis*, 359–60 and 5. Recently a Hungarian scholar I. Perszel indicated many parallels between Symeon and Dionysios; in particular, in Symeon's *Theol*. 3. 155 ff. (cf. Div.*Names* 1. 3; ibid. 1. 6), *Cat*. 18. 433–9 (cf. *Div. Names* 1. 4), *Hymn* 23. 374 ff. (cf. *Div. Names* 3. 1), etc.: see 'Parallèles'. However, none of these parallels is direct, and so one may argue that Symeon was perhaps influenced not by the Areopagite himself, but rather by some characteristic expressions of the Areopagitic language, particularly those accumulated by the church office. On the links between the Areopagite, Symeon and Nikitas see also Golitzin, 'Hierarchy'.

(19) *Vie* 4. 16; 6. 22.

(20) See *Cat*. 4. 540–3; 30. 140–2. In the course of this study some points of similarity between Symeon and Klimakos will be indicated.

(21) I. Hausherr argues that Nikitas' expression *Μάρκου καὶ Διαδόχου* can be understood as *Μάρκου τοῦ Διαδόχου* which would be a corruption of *Μάρκου τοῦ Ἀσκητη*: *Mystique*, 7 (n. 3). We, however, do not see any reason for such a suspicion, even though Symeon himself speaks only of 'the book by Mark the Monk *On the Spiritual Law*' in the parallel passage (*Cat*. 22. 34–5). The expression *Μάρκου τοῦ Διαδόχου*, which does occur in some manuscripts,

refers to Diadochos as a successor of Mark, but not to Mark himself. Generally Diadochos was the closest spiritual author to Mark; the writings by Mark very often precede those by Diadochos in the manuscript tradition: see Ware, 'Marc, *Traités*', p. xl.

(22) *Cat*. 22. 40–51.

(23) Cf. the quotation from Longinos in *Eth*. 2. 7. 201–3; some allusions to sayings of Arsenios in *Cat*. 6. 71–118; the allusion to the apophthegm by 'our holy fathers' (presumably Anthony or Poimin) in *Cat*. 4. 456–8; cf. also *Cat*. 21. 31–2.

(24) This is in spite of the fact that the *Sh*. *Cat*. by Theodore the Studite were read in the Stoudion (and possibly in other dependent monasteries) three times a week during church services: see *L. Theod*. *Stud*. 36 [152 C].

(25) 'Symeon' [*LTK* 9, 1215 ff]. For the bibliography on 'Makarian Homilies' see Quasten, *Patrology* III, 165–6. I consider the *Homilies* which survived under the name of Makarios of Egypt (whoever their real author might be) as belonging to Orthodox tradition, whereas they are regarded by some scholars as a product of Messalian spirituality: see especially H. Dörries' early monograph *Symeon* (1941). In the opinion of A. Louth, the very fact that all known anti-Messalian lists (that is, by Theodoret of Cyr, Timothy of Constantinople, and John of Damascus) are based on the text of the 'Makarian Homilies' 'makes unavoidable the judgement that the "Homilies" are of Messalian provenance': see *Origins*, 115. Cf. the anti-Messalian list by John of Damascus, *Her*. 80 [42–3] with a commentary by B. Kotter, who indicates direct parallels with 'Makarian Homilies'. On the other hand, H. Dörries, who changed his view on Makarian origins after many years of study, in his later work (1978) suggests that 'Makarian Homilies' were taken over by the Messalians one generation after the life of their author, who was himself in fact an adversary of the Messalians, rejecting the main features of their doctrine, such as 'enthusiasm' and the claim of 'the perfect' on sinlessness: *Theologie*, 12–13; on tne rejection of Messalianism by Makarios see also Meyendorff, 'Messalianism'. Generally, I share the later theory of Dörries, as well as the opinion of W. Jaeger that 'Makarios interpreted those of his beliefs that scholars have compared with what little we know of the Messalian sect in a more spiritual sense, and did not take them from this heretical group but from some common monastic tradition': *Works*, 225. Cf. the opinion of C. Stewart, who suggests that it is impossible to know whether Makarios belonged to the Messalians: '*Working*', 235 ft. The Eastern patristic tradition finally integrated the Makarian heritage as wholly Orthodox. Isaac the Syrian even quoted Makarios *against* the Messalians: see *Syr*. *Hom, 72* [495 and 500]. In this study I follow the traditional attitude of the Eastern Church to Makarios and cite his writings among other patristic sources, regarding them 'as an authentic expression of Eastern Christian spirituality at its best': cf. Ware, 'Introductory Note' in *Philokalia* (English) 3. 283.

(26) On the attribution of the letter see Staats, 'Macarius, *Epistola*', 11 ff. (with the full bibliography of the question on pp. 79–81).

(27) *SC* 113. 270–3 (notes).

(28) *Praxis*, 357. Cf. Hatzopoulos, *Two Outstanding Cases*, 49.

(29) *Sens*, 197–8.

(30) I had a chance to examine the manuscript *Coisl*. 268, which belongs to the period of the Hesychast renaissance (13th-14th centuries), where the homilies of Isaac the Syrian are supplied with patristic parallels—among them there are many from Symeon: cf., for example, ff. 7; 9v.; 10v. (Ps.-Symeon); 25v.; 45. For the bibliography on Isaac the Syrian see, in particular, Alfeyev, *Isaac*. On Isaac's general background see also Miller, 'Epilogue'; idem, 'Introduction'; Khalifé-Hachem, 'Isaac'; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism III*, 336–49.

(31) Cf. Krivocheine, 'Zealot', 117–18. Cf. also the remark by I. Hausherr: 'The New Theologian must surely have read Isaac the Syrian'; *Penthos*, 133. Hausherr even intended to undertake a special study on the connection between Isaac and 'the school of the New Theologian': ibid. 195. Unfortunately, the scholar did not undertake it.

(32) See Miller, 'Introduction' to Isaac (English), p. xxxv.

(33) Ibid. p. xc-xci. These are *Hom*. 2, 7, 43, and 80 of the Greek printed edition.

(34) Another important 11th-century anthology, parallel to that of *Evergetinos*, is the *Interpretations of the Lord's Commandments* by Nikon of the Black Mountain: see Ware, 'Synagoge', 327 ff.

(35) See Chapter 2.

(36) *Sh*. *Cat*. 41.

(37) Turner, *Fatherhood*, 51.

(38) *Cat*. *6*. 19–20.

(39) *Cat*. *6*. 40–6.

(40) Cf. *L. Anth*. 7–8 [150–8].

(41) cf. *L. Anth*. 10 [162–4].

(42) *Cat*. *6*. 5–65.

(43) We see the difference in approach between Symeon and Athanasios, who puts this episode at an early point in the 'Life' (ch. 10), regarding subsequent events as more important. Another difference is that Athanasios speaks of an unconscious presence of Christ, whereas Symeon always insists that this presence must be conscious.

(44) *L. Anth*. 10 [162–4]. Cf. a similar description of the appearance of the light in *Apophthegmata*, Makarios of Egypt 33 [276 D]: 'the roof opened and the light appeared as in the day'.

(45) *Hymn* 40. 8–9.

(46) *Euch*. 1. 159–61.

(47) *Cat*. 6. 71–89. Symeon retells here the 'Life of Arsenios' written by Theodore the Studite [*PG 99*. 849–82].

(48) *Cat*. 6. 89–95. Cf. the assertion by the 8th-century Syriac writer Joseph Hazzaya that Arsenios saw the divine light: 'The blessed abba Arsenios [did not speak with his visitors]...because his spirit rejoiced...in that holy light which appeared to him...The inner wonder stopped his tongue and prevented him from speaking'; *Monast*. 111 [384–7].

(49) *Cat*. 6. 95–8. As B. Krivocheine argues, Symeon refers here to the *Apophthegmata*, Arsenios 10 [89 c]: 'If we search for God, He will appear to us; and if we catch Him, He will remain with us'; see *SC* 104. 20–1 (n. 4). However, Symeon might have implied a collection of chapters which is now lost.

(50) *Cat*. *6*. 22–32.

(51) *Sh*. *Cat*. 38.

(52) *Cat*. 5. 559–72. All the holy women listed belong to the 5th century.

(53) *Cat*. 5. 573–625.

(54) *Cat*. 5. 637–44. The names of Patriarchs are not put in chronological order: after John Chrysostom (354–07) there are John the Almsgiver (Patriarch of Alexandria, +609); Gregory the Theologian (330–90); Ignatios (Patriarch of Constantinople in 847–58 and 867–77); Tarasios (Patriarch of Constantinople in 784–806); Methodios (Patriarch of Constantinople in 843–7). The names of Metropolitans are also given in a rather spontaneous order: Basil the Great (+379); Gregory of Nyssa (+394); Gregory the Wonderworker (+270); Ambrose of Milan (+397); Nicholas of Myra (4th century?). As B. Krivochéine points out, the presence of Ignatios and the absence of Photios in Symeon's list is significant: 'like the majority of monks of his epoch, and particularly the Studites, Symeon seems to have more

sympathy for him than for Photios, whom he does not mention'; *SC 96*. 433 (n. 1). The presence of Ambrose of Milan indicates that this Western saint was known and venerated in the East in the time of Symeon.

(55) *Cat*. *5*. 666–72.

(56) *Sh*. *Cat*. 38.

(57) See also Chapter 1.

(58) Cf. Krivochéine, 'Zapiska', 94–8.

(59) *Cat*. 21. 22–35.

(60) *Cat*. 21. 82–8.

(61) 92. 1 [370–2]. Cf. Gen: 49. 33.

(62) *Cat*. 21. 99–100.

(63) *Cat*. 29. *6–67*. Such nostalgia for 'the days of the Fathers' is not a new phenomenon in the monasticism of the time of Symeon: it is a leitmotiv of *the Apophthegmata*; cf. Ischirionos [241 D–244 A]; John Kolovos 14 [208 CD]; Poimin 166 [361 C]; Elijah 2 [184 AB] and 8 [185 AB].

(64) *Cat*. 29. 20–47.

(65) *Cat*. 29. 68–98. In this list of saints the presence of Stephen the Younger is worth mentioning: he was martyred in 764 under Constantine V Copronymos for the veneration of icons, and so was relatively recent for Symeon, who was born two centuries after him. The 'Life of Stephen' (see the text in *PG* 100. 1067–1186) is, according to I. Ševčenko, 'a jewel of the hagiography of the iconoclastic period'; written in 806, it soon achieved great popularity in Byzantium: see 'Hagiography', 115.

(66) *Cat*. 29. 99–101.

(67) *Cat*. 29. 137–67. Symeon constantly returns to this theme: he discusses it in *Cat*. 6 and 34, *Eth*. 4 and 9, *Ep*. 4, *Hymn* 22, and other writings.

(68) See *Mosc*. 417 quoted in *SC* 113. 178–9 (glossa).

(69) Florovsky, *Viz*. *Otcy*, 250. Cf. the words of the Patriarch Tarasios and Theodore the Studite allegedly spoken to the emperor Leo the Armenian: 'The rejection of God's icon leads…to the rejection of the Son of God Himself, Who…became man as we are and revealed to us the characteristics of His divine image'; *L*. *Theod*. *Stud*. 64 [173 B].

(70) Florovsky, *Vyz*. *Otcy*, 252; cf. also Ware, *Church*, 32–4.

(71) See Martin, *Controversy*, 130–1.

(72) In fact, the veneration of saints was also at issue during the iconoclastic controversy, though it was then a minor and supplementary question: see Martin, *Controversy*, 52 and 190. John of Damascus argued against those who rejected the veneration of saints as follows: 'You are not waging war against images, but against the saints themselves…Scripture calls the saints gods [Ps. 82: 1]…The saints during their earthly lives were filled with the Holy Spirit, and when they fulfilled their course, the grace of the Holy Spirit does not depart from their souls or their bodies in the tombs, or from their likeness and holy images, not by the nature of these things, but by grace and power'; *Imag*. I. 19 [94–5] (text and glossa). It is not surprising that Symeon would refer to the discourses 'On Images' by John of Damascus in defence of his own practice (see below).

(73) Let us recall that Stephen of Nikomidia was probably himself a hagiographer (see Chapter 1) and as such, a continuer of the 'archivization of saints' which was begun by Symeon the Metaphrastis.

(74) The first reference is to *Exp*. 4. 15. 51 ff. [204–5]; the second to *Imag*. 2. 11 [101–2].

(75) *Vie* 87. 18–93. 11 (summarized).

(76) *Hymn* 15. 209.

(77) Cf. *Ep*. 1. 16 [127].

(78) *Cap*.3. 2–4.

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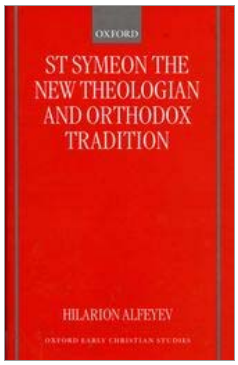

St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition
Hilarion Alfeyev

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Triadological Polemic in the Writings of Symeon

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Source: Orthodox TraditionHilarion Alfeyev
Author(s):

Hilarion Alfeyev

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Abstract and Keywords

Symeon the New Theologian's three ‘Theological Discourses’ and ‘Hymn 21’ are entirely devoted to the polemic on triadological matters. What was the underlying reason for this polemic? The answer to this question, which has not yet been satisfactorily investigated by scholars, will reveal more about the place of Symeon in the history of Orthodox theology. In the discourses, the main subject of discussion is Jesus Christ's words ‘My Father is greater than I’ (John 14:28), whereas in the hymn it is the ‘intellectual or actual’ distinction between the Father and Son. The unknown opponent in the discourses is accused by Symeon of subordinationism and hidden Arianism, whereas Stephen is criticized in the hymn mainly for his attempt to explain the distinction between the Father and the Son in a rational way. Symeon's trinitaritarism might be characterized as both highly traditional and somewhat synthetic: his theology is a combination of the heritage of the triadological polemic of the preceding centuries with a strong apophaticism taken from Dionysius and a monastic resistance to the discussion of theological matters.

Keywords: Symeon the New Theologian, Theological Discourses, Hymn 21, Orthodox theology, Jesus Christ, subordinationism, Arianism, Stephen, apophaticism, trinitarianism

There are many pages in Symeon’s writings which deal with triadological (or trinitarian) questions: the three ‘Theological Discourses’ and ‘Hymn 21’ are entirely devoted to the polemic on triadological matters. What was the underlying reason for this polemic? The answer to this question, which has not yet been satisfactorily investigated by scholars, will reveal more about the place of Symeon in the history of Orthodox theology.

1. ‘My Father Is Greater than I’

When reading theological polemical texts, it is always interesting to know with whom the author polemicizes, because in such texts it is the doctrine of the opponent that conditions the development of the subject. In the case of Symeon's 'Theological Discourses', it is not known who his specific opponent was. J. Darrouzès suggests it might have been Stephen of Nikomidia, on the basis of the fact that the triadological polemic in Symeon's 'Hymn 21' was addressed to him.[1] The similarity in tone and development of some themes between the discourses and the hymn is obvious. However, the main subject of discussion in the two works is different: in the discourses it is Jesus Christ's words 'My Father is greater than I' (John 14: 28), whereas in the hymn it is the 'intellectual or actual' distinction between the Father and Son. The unknown opponent in the discourses is accused by Symeon of subordinationism and hidden Arianism,[2] whereas Stephen is criticized in the hymn mainly for his attempt to explain the distinction between the Father and the Son in a rational way, and there is no indication that he was inclined to subordinationism or suspected of it.

(p. 144) But who else if not Stephen? Unfortunately, we do not know much about theological controversies current in Constantinople at the time of Symeon; and what we do know, hardly corresponds to the themes discussed by the latter. Symeon's argument was probably not connected with anti-Latin polemic, in which the Patriarch Sergios II with his Synod was involved between 1009 and 1019.[3] It might though have been connected with anti-Armenian polemic of the same period.[4] There are some themes which are common to Symeon's writings and to Byzantine treatises against Armenians;[5] however, any direct reference to this polemic is absent in Symeon.

We are better informed, owing to V. Grumel's references and especially to the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy*, published with a commentary by J. Gouillard, about the Byzantine arguments in the time after Symeon,[6] for we find that there was a controversy in the 1160s about the words 'My Father is greater than I', which was connected with the names of Dimitrios Lampinos, Constantine of Korfou, and the monk Eirinikos, and finished with a condemnation of their alleged heresy twice, in 1166–7 and 1170.[7] Though this condemnation took place almost one hundred and fifty years after the death of Symeon, the controversy must have developed over a certain length of time, with the arguments about the controversial verse developing much earlier. The controversy in which Symeon was involved might have been a direct predecessor of the arguments of the twelfth century,[8] so it seems worthwhile to examine it here, though without going into the historical details of its development.

But first of all, let us recall how John 14: 28 was interpreted by **(p. 145)** earlier tradition. The verse was extensively discussed during the Arian controversy in the fourth century.[9] Alexander of Alexandria, in defiance of the Arian interpretation, suggests that the Father is greater than the Son only because 'to Him alone belongs the property of being unbegotten', whereas the Son is begotten.[10] Basil the Great speaks of the Father as the 'cause' (*αἰτία*) and 'beginning' (*ἀρχή*) of the Son.[11] Athanasios emphasizes that the Father has no beginning, whereas the Son is begotten from the Father.[12]

Side by side with this interpretation, we find in Athanasios another one, with reference to the Incarnation of God: 'As He became man, He says that the Father is greater, but being the Word of the Father He is equal to the Father.'[13] Gregory Nazianzen, without rejecting the first interpretation, seems more favourable to the second one, suggesting that John 14: 28 should be explained as relating to the human nature of Christ. He advances a general principle of Orthodox understanding of all similar 'pejorative' expressions:

> You should relate the more exalted expressions [of the Gospel] to the Godhead and to the nature which is higher than suffering and the body, and the more pejorative expressions—to the One Who emptied Himself, Who was incarnate and...became man.[14]

Another church writer of the same period, Amphilochios of Iconium, definitely prefers the second interpretation to the first. He devotes an entire homily to the controversial words,[15] which he understands as referring to the 'dispensation of the flesh' of Christ.[16] Speaking in the person of Jesus Christ, he argues that, since Christ is God and man at the same time, He should speak of Himself in a twofold way:

> I say sometimes that I am equal with the Father, sometimes that 'My Father is greater than I', not contending against Myself, but showing that I am God **(p. 146)** and man...But if you wish to know how My Father is greater than I, I said this of the flesh and not of the person of the Godhead.[17] I am equal to Him because of My birth from Him; and He is greater because of My birth from the Virgin.[18]

That is, the Father is greater than the man Jesus Christ, but equal to Jesus as God.[19] Amphilochios is not inclined to understand the Father's 'being unbegotten' as the reason why He should be greater than the Son.[20]

These are the two main interpretations of John 14: 28 in early patristic tradition. In the subsequent theological debates, such as those with the Monophysites and Monothelites, the verse was not a central point of discussion. Wherever it was discussed, the second interpretation was recalled more frequently. In particular, Anastasios of Sinai argues that John 14: 28 and other similar expressions relate to the human nature of Christ in general rather than to His body or flesh in particular.[21] Twice he quotes Amphilochios, whose discourse on John 14: 28 seems to have been considered as a *regula fidei* in this epoch.[22]

It is rather surprising that the verse became an issue again in the middle of the twelfth century, when the emperor, the Eastern patriarchs, bishops, clergymen, monks, and lay people found themselves involved in the argument.[23] During this controversy, which is well documented,[24] several interpretations of John 14:28 were discussed:[25] **(p. 147)** (I) the Father is greater because He is 'the cause' (*αἰτία*) of the Only-begotten Son; (2a) Christ says this phrase referring to His human birth, or (2b) in particular to His human flesh which He took upon Himself;[26] (3) Christ says this with reference to His self-emptying (*κένωσις*);[27] (4) Christ says this honouring His Father;[28] (5) Christ says this as a representative of all humanity and on behalf of it;[29] (6) the verse should be understood according to the distinction which exists *κατ' ἐπίνοιαν* ('in a conceptual sense') between the Father and the Son. Only the first two interpretations were approved by the councils as Orthodox;[30] the fourth one was neither approved nor condemned, while the third, the fifth, and the sixth were condemned.

It would not be relevant to our main subject to analyse in detail why the three interpretations, all of which derived from the terminology used by the church Fathers, were condemned by the Councils of 1166–70.[31] Generally speaking, the heretics of the twelfth century employed patristic interpretations of John 14: 28 to confirm their false doctrines, so the issues arose not so much around the interpretations themselves as around these doctrines. However, we should look at the sixth interpretation, that is, with reference to the division *κατ' ἐπίνοιαν* which is of special importance for our subject, because it is reflected in Symeon's polemic with Stephen of Nikomidia in 'Hymn 21'.

The expression *κατ' ἐπίνοιαν* occurs, among other Fathers, in John of Damascus, who says that there are expressions in the Gospel about Christ which must be understood

> according to the division in a conceptual sense [*διά τὴν κατ'ἐπίνοιαν δίαίρεσιν*], that is, if you separate in thought [*τῇ ἐπίνοίαν*] what is inseparable in reality [*τῇ ἀληθείᾳ*]...[32]

However, John 14: 28 is not listed among such expressions. John of **(p. 148)** Damascus was not the first who employed the term *κατ' ἐπίνοιαν*: it derives from the early Fathers, who employed it to distinguish various aspects of Christ's redemptive activity.[33]

The difference between the concept of John of Damascus and the doctrine of the heretics of the twelfth century is that the first proposes the division *κατ' ἐπίνοιαν* in a subjunctive mood, just as a possible theological method, whereas the heretical idea was that the distinction between Godhead and manhood in Christ, or even the distinction between the Father and the Son, actually exists *κατ' ἐπίνπιαν*, on the conceptual level. Both the *Edict* by Manuel Comninos and the *Synodikon* speak against those who say that the division between the human flesh of Christ and His divine nature is seen 'only in conceptual sense' (*κατά ψιλήν ἐπίνοιαν*).[34] The decree of the Council of 1170 also mentions the opinion that the Father is greater than the Son 'because of the difference which is in a conceptual sense' (*διά τήν κατ ἐπίνοιαν διαίρεσιν*).[35] The *Synodikon* provides a speciaanathema for those who think that the human flesh of Christ possessed 'physical characteristics' only 'in conceptual sense' (*κατά ψιλήν ἐπίνοιαν*) and not in reality:[36] this understanding is close to Doceticism. Therefore, though the term *κατ' ἐπίνοιαν* occurs in Orthodox Fathers, the sources of 1166–70 speak out against its heretical usage.[37]

Now, returning to Symeon, who stands chronologically between the Arian controversy and the argument of 1160s, though much closer to the latter, we will find that the centuries-old struggle around John 14: 28 is reflected in his 'Theological Discourses'. Symeon begins by criticizing those who 'try to repeat the sayings of the divinely inspired theologians, which they directed to the heretics **(p. 149)** in times past and which have been handed on to us in

writing'.[38] Then Symeon expounds the doctrine of his opponent:

> 'The only reason why the Father is greater than the Son', he [the opponent] says, 'is that He is the cause (*αἴτιος*) of the Son's existence'...Such are the vain novelties which their senseless theology proclaims. They do not know the reasons why the theologians spoke in this way against the heretics. Being unable to grasp the true sense of the writings, they stumble...[39]

We see that Symeon's opponent does not say anything new but simply repeats the interpretation of John 14: 28 by Basil the Great and some other Fathers of the fourth century; and Symeon recognizes this. However, he argues that, though there were reasons in the past to speak about God in such a way, it was caused by the necessity to struggle against the Arians and must be understood in the context of this polemic.

> Who has taught you, [Symeon continues], about these measures and degrees in God, about this 'first' and 'second', this 'greater' and 'lesser'? Who has set this out so clearly concerning Those Who are invisible and unknown, Who are absolutely beyond thought and speech? Since They are eternally united and eternally unchanging, They cannot have any priority among Themselves. If you want to say that the Father is prior to the Son because the Son is born from Him...then I for my part say to you that the Son is prior to the Father, for if the Son had not been born then the Father would not have been called 'Father'. And if you place the Father altogether before the Son...then I also deny that He is the 'cause' of the Son, for in this way you allow it to be implied that before the Son was begotten He did not exist...They are eternally united and eternally unchanging, so They cannot be the cause of one another.[40]

The impression one has when reading this passage is that Symeon refuses one of the Orthodox interpretations of John 14: 28. In fact, later on he admits, recalling traditional comparisons, that 'the Father is the cause of the Son just as the mind is of the spoken word or the spring of the stream, or root of branches', without His being 'prior' to the Son.[41] However, the interpretation with reference to the human nature of Christ is much closer to Symeon, and in this he reminds us of Amphilochios of Iconium, who also argued against the first understanding and maintained that it is only with regard to the human being, but not in regard to God, that the one who begets is **(p. 150)** greater than the one who is begotten. This is what Symeon actually develops, insisting on the incomprehensibility of God's nature, and so on the impossibility of discussing what exists within the Trinity:

> We say that the Father is the cause of the birth of the Son in regard to His bodily generation, but as to that divine non-subsistent subsistence[*ἀνυπάρκτον ὑπάξεως*], unborn birth [*ἀγεννήτον γενήσεως*], non-substantial substance [*ἀνυποστάτον ὑποστάσεως*] and super-essential essence [*ὑπερουσίον οὐσιώσεως*]...if anyone talks about a first, he must refer to a second and a third...What a foolish and dangerous undertaking it would be to measure out the immeasurable or to speak about the ineffable or to discuss about that which is beyond words![42]

This sudden move towards strongly apophatic terminology, characteristic of the Dionysian tradition, shows us how Symeon himself is inclined to comprehend triadological matters. In fact, he recalls the traditional interpretations, showing his clear sympathy towards one and admitting another with reservations, but he definitely prefers not to attach 'human' terminology to divine things: he would avoid, for example, referring to the Father as *αἰτία* (cause) of the Son, which, in his opinion, does not make sense outside the context of anti-Arian controversy. We may suggest that Symeon in his triadological polemic sums up what had been said by the preceding theologians, showing what of this had value within a certain polemical framework in the past, and what is still important in the present. He finds himself much closer to the apophatic approach than to any attempt to explain divine things in cataphatic terms (to use the terminology introduced into Christian theology by Dionysios the Areopagite that distinguishes between an approach to God by way of denial-*apophasis* because of His transcendent reality from an approach to God by way of *affirmation-catapbasis* of what we know of God from reason and revelation). Symeon's opponents in the 'Theological Discourses' do not seem to express heretical views, but only to put an emphasis on certain expressions, traditional by themselves but taken out of their historical context and discussed in a rational way. This rationalism rather than certain interpretations of John 14: 28 seems to be at the heart of the controversy: Symeon regarded it as a dangerous deviation from Orthodoxy and struggled against it. History of the Byzantine Church showed that he was right and all attempts to explain John 14: 28 in a rationalistic way were later condemned.

(p. 151) 2. 'How Do You Distinguish the Son from the Father...?'

Let us now look at how Symeon replies to Stephen of Nikomidia's question in 'Hymn 21', in order to understand what kind of theological argument might have existed between them. The question was: 'How do you distinguish the Son from the Father, through a conceptual distinction [*ἐπινοίᾳ*] or a real distinction [*πράγματι*]?'[43] The term *ἐπίνοια* is now familiar: as was indicated above, it has had a long history in patristic usage. The question most probably reflects the polemic which was currently running in Constantinople. But which answer was expected on Symeon's part? The question seems to be composed in such a way as in both cases, if Symeon admits either a 'conceptual' or an 'actual' distinction, he might be suspected of heresy. If Symeon says that the distinction is 'actual', it might be taken to imply that the essence (*οὐσία*) of the two Hypostases is different, and so Symeon might be accused of Arianism; at least he would be involved in a difficult terminological argument. If he suggests that the distinction is only 'conceptual', he might be found guilty of the heresy of Sabellios, who taught that 'there exists one and the same Being, called Father and Son, not One derived from the Other, but Himself from Himself, nominally called Father and Son according to the changing of names.'[44]

Symeon, however, gives a balanced theological answer, denouncing both sides which take part in the controversy. He speaks here in the form of a prayer:

> You have totally accomplished Your plan of salvation [*οἰκονομίαν*]
> And You have made the corruptible being similar to Yourself,
> And made him god, O God, Who coexist by nature [*συνυπάρχων φύσει*],
> Who precede all eternity, with God the coeternal,
> Your Son and the Word, Who was born from You,
> And Who is not separated from You by a conceptual distinction [*ἐπινοίᾳ*],
> But Who is in reality [*πράγματι*] inseparable from You.
> Even if He is separated, it is not by nature [*φύσει*],
> But rather by His Hypostasis [*ὑποστάσει*], or by His Person [*προσώπω*],
> For 'by real distinction' [*πράγματι*] is what the impious and atheists say,
> And 'by a conceptual distinction' [*ἐπινοίᾳ*] is what those who are totally in darkness say.[45]

(p. 152) Continuing, Symeon transfers the issue to the realm of theological method, several times returning to the suggestion that the distinction between the Hypostases within the Trinity is beyond human words and understanding. Only those, he says, who are enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit may receive the revelation from the Father 'that the Son is begotten without division in the manner that He alone knows'.[46] Instead of useless discussions a man (Symeon's opponent is implied) would do better to pray to God, in the hope of thereby 'coming to know the grace of the Spirit, that, even absent, He is present by His power...and that He is everywhere and nowhere' (*πάντη καὶ οδαμοῦ*).[47] Recalling traditional patristic comparisons, Symeon says about the Son:

> How does He issue from the Father? Like the word [*λόγος*] comes from the mind.
> How is He separated from Him? Like the voice from the speech [*λόγος*].
> How does He become incarnate? Like a written word [*λόγος*].[48]

However, these comparisons are only 'strange' examples, thoughts and things (*παραδείγματα ξένα, ἐπίνοιαι τε καὶ πράγματα*), which are totally human and thus are unable to express and name the divine nature.[49]

Symeon then turns to the theme of the total inexpressibility of God, Who 'dwells in the unapproachable light' (I Tim. 6: 16) and 'made darkness His secret place' (Ps. 18: 11), so no one is able to comprehend Him: even Paul who was caught up into heaven and heard unspeakable divine words 'which it is not lawful for a man to utter' (2 Cor. 12: 4).[50] In spite of all of this, the 'new heretics' claim to comprehend the divine nature:

> Who will not tremble, who will not weep
> About the blindness and the darkening of those who now speak
> And innovate a really strange dilemma [*αἵρεσιν*],
> Which immerses them all in one abyss,
> Those who ask the question and those who are being asked?

For if they separate the Word either by a conceptual distinction
Or by a real one, they come to nothing and, lamentably,
Fall into heresy [*αἵρεσιν*] from both sides:
Because to separate 'in reality', is to cut the Word [from the Father],
And 'in thought', is to confuse Him, as if He were not distinguished
[from the Father] at all.[51]

(p. 153) The rest of the hymn is devoted to Symeon's advice to his opponent to 'know himself, to 'discuss about himself',[52] and to 'comprehend himself, or rather philosophize about himself and his own',[53] so that through this, as well as through the contemplation of nature, he may come to repentance and knowledge of God. These are traditional themes of ascetical literature,[54] which are developed here in terms close to the 'Theological Orations' by Gregory Nazianzen and to John Chrysostom's 'On the Incomprehensibility of God'.

Now, what shall we deduce from the analysis of Symeon's triadological polemic with regard to our main subject? First of all, Symeon appears to be very familiar with the dogmatic literature of the Eastern Church, recalling traditional interpretations and triadological comparisons which derive from the early Fathers. Secondly, he prefers apophatic language when discussing matters which concern the divine being, and refuses any attempt to interpret the relations between the Hypostases of the Holy Trinity in a rationalistic way: we can say that the heresy against which he spoke out was a kind of trinitarian rationalism. Thirdly, defending apophaticism in trinitarian themes, Symeon defended in fact the tradition of the Fathers, such as Gregory Nazianzen, John Chrysostom, and Dionysios the Areopagite, for whom the theme of the incomprehensibility of God was of great importance,[55] though each developed it in his own manner. Symeon's trinitaritarism might be therefore characterized as both highly traditional and somewhat synthetic: his theology is a combination of the heritage of the triadological polemic of the preceding centuries with a strong apophaticism taken from Dionysios and a monastic resistance to the discussion of theological matters.

The last point that should be made here is that the theological terminology used by Symeon for the expression of his ideas is very balanced and exact. Perhaps we might find in Symeon some kind of terminological instability when he develops mystical themes, or theological themes in their mystical aspect, which is caused by the very nature of mystical theology and by Symeon's apophatic language. But when he discusses triadological matters, his usage of theological terms is perfectly traditional and accurate, even in hymns, where one might expect rather free usage because of the necessity to compose phrases in accordance with a rhythm. The twenty-first 'Hymn' together with the three 'Theological Discourses' can be **(p. 154)** regarded as good examples of Symeon's capability of expressing dogmatic ideas and conducting a polemic with his opponents on a high theological level.

Notes:

(1) *SC* 122. 9–10.

(2) Cf. :'you imply that there was a time when God was alone, when the Son was not'; *Theol.* 1. 57–8 (a clear allusion to the 4th-century Arian phraseology).

(3) V. Grumel refers to some important documents, written at this time by Sergios, such as: the letters to the Pope concerning the question *of Filioque*, the act of excommunication of the Pope, and the encyclical letters to other Eastern patriarchs concerning this excommunication: *Regestes*, i. 1. 240–2. It is significant that there is no trace of anti-Latin polemic in any of Symeon the New Theologian's writings: he was certainly more interested in struggle against his direct opponents inside the Eastern Church rather than in arguments with the Westerners. In this Nikitas Stithatos was a contrast to Symeon, since he was personally involved in anti-Latin polemic around 1054: cf. Demetrakopoulos, *Bibliotheca, ε'–η'*, 18–36.

(4) On this polemic see Darrouzès, 'Documents', 89–102; Garsoian, 'Nil'.

(5) Cf., for example, the discussion of John 14: 28 in Symeon's 'Theological Discourses' and in Euthymios of Paphlagonia's 'Oration I Against Armenians' [PG 132. 1161 D-1164 D] (for the authorship of Euthymios see V. Grumel, 'Invectives').

(6) See Grumel, *Regestes*, i. 1. 263 (no. 850); Gouillard, *Synodikon* [186–215].

(7) For Dimitrios see *DHGE* 14 (1960), 210–11. For Constantine and Eirinikos, as well as for the councils of 1166–71 see Gouillard, *Synodikon* [216–22]. For the development of the heresy after 1180 see ibid. [223–4].

(8) Cf. Darrouzès, *SC* 122. 98–9 (n. 1).

(9) For the interpretation of the verse in pre-Nicaean period see Simonetti, 'Giovanni', 151–2; Sakkos, *Patir*, i. 73–6.

(10) *Ep*. 1. 12 [568 B].

(11) *Eunom*. 1. 25 [262]. Cf. Simonetti, 'Giovanni', 156–7.

(12) *Synod*. 27 [741 C].

(13) *Incarn.-Arian*. 3 [989 BC].

(14) *Disc*. 29. 3. 18. 21–5 [216]. This interpretation derives from Irenaeus: see *Her*. 2. 28. 8. As S. Sakkos indicates, it is therefore the most ancient interpretation: *Patir*, i. 98. However, Gregory regards Basil's interpretation as equally possible: see *Disc*. 30. 7. 5–6 [240], where he claims that 'the Father is greater than the Son because of His being the "cause" [of the Son], but equal [to Him] by nature'.

(15) There are only four fragments of this homily which survived in Greek: see *Opera*, 227–30. However, the Syriac version contains almost entire text: see 'My Father' [*Muséon* 43. 317–64].

(16) 'My Father', 244.

(17) Ibid. 348.

(18) *Fragm*. 11. 2 [228]. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, 'Godhead' [565 A], which is also mostly devoted to the discussion of John 14: 28: 'When the Word looks at His human nature, He confesses that what is unseen is greater than what is seen in flesh; but when He raises His mind to the divine, He does not any more give a comparison and juxtaposition of the "greater" and "less"; instead of this, He preaches the oneness: "I and My Father are one" [John 10: 30]'.

(19) 'My Father', 354.

(20) ibid. 346.

(21) 'Guide' xxi. 1. 13–20 [284]. Cf. also ibid. x. 1. 2. 144–50 [155].

(22) Cf. Anastasios of Sinai, 'Guide' x. 1.2. 128–31 [154]; 'Sermons' IV. 2. 131–7 [94]. Cf. the interpretation with reference to Christ's human nature in Cyril of Alexandria, *Horn. John* 7 [245–6]; *Thesaurus* 9 [117 BC]. Cf. also similar interpretation in Maximos the Confessor, *Marin*. 1 [217 CD].

(23) Petit, 'Documents', 476. J. Meyendorff suggests that the controversy may have been originated by the intellectual contacts with the West: *Christ*, 200. On the connection between the Council of 1166 and the Westerners see Classen, 'Konzil'.

(24) See the edict of Emperor Manuel in *PG* 133. 773–81; the acts of the councils of 1166–70 in Petit, 'Documents', 479–93 and Sakkos, *Patir*, ii. 120–86; a long passage in Gouillard, *Synodikon*, 472–571 [75–81].

(25) See Manuel, *Edict* 2 [776 BD]. See also the acts of the Synod of 1166 in Sakkos, *Patir*, ii. 120–2, 137–53, 156 ff.

(26) The interpretation with reference to the flesh of Christ is in fact a subdivision of the 'human' interpretation, and occurs in Amphilochios (see above); cf. also Gregory of Nyssa, *Ar.-Savel*. [82] and other authors.

(27) Cf. Photios, *Ep*. 176 [18–25]; Hilary of Poitiers, *Trinity* 9. 51 [429]. See also Sakkos, *Patir*, i. 116–26.

(28) Cf. Epiphanios of Salamis, *Anchor* 17 [26]; cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus* 11 [152 A].

(29) Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc*. 30. 5. 26 [234].

(30) See Gouillard, *Synodikon* 482–7 [75] and 519–21 [79].

(31) For the full discussion see Sakkos, *Patiri* i. 116–33.

(32) *Exp*. 4. 18. 106–7 [216].

(33) See Lampe, *PGL*, 528. Athanasios opposes Arios, who 'restricts the term Word to a conceptual sense' (*κατ' ἐπίνοιαν λέγει τόν λόγον*), to Dionysios, who calls Christ true God 'by nature' (*φύσει*);*Dionys*. 24 [516 B]. Gregory Nazianzen uses this expression when saying that the names we give to God differ in accord with the sense (*ἐπίνοιαν*) of discussion: *Disc*. 29. 13. 18–19 [204]. Leontios of Byzantium, arguing against the Monophysites, says that 'the humanity [of Christ]...is separated from His divinity in thought and not in reality [*ἐπίνοίᾳ ν καὶ οὐκ ἐνεργείᾳ*]': *Sever*. [1973 C]. In all these cases the term *κατ ἐπίνοιαν* ('by thought') serves as an antonym of *κατά φύσιν* ('by nature') or *κατ' ἐνέργειαν* ('in reality', 'in practice').

(34) See *Edict* 7 [781 A]; Gouillard, *Synodikon* 523–6 [79].

(35) Petit,'Documents', 481.

(36) Gouillard, *Synodikon* 529–30 *[79]*.

(37) In the passage quoted above from John of Damascus (*Exp*. 4. 18) the division 'in thought' (*κατ ἐπίνοιαν*)was proposed in subjunctive mood ('if...in our thought we make a distinction...'), whereas the heretics of the twelfth century transformed this proposition into a theological doctrine.

(38) *Theol*. I. 6–7.

(39) *Theol*. I. 13–20.

(40) *Theol*. I. 27–48.

(41) *Theol*. I. 72–5.

(42) *Theol*. 1. 64–72.

(43) *Vie* 75. 16–17.

(44) Quoted by Hippolytos, *Her*. 9. 10. 11 [244–5].

(45) *Hymn* 21. 23–34.

(46) *Hymn* 21.108–10.

(47) *Hymn* 21.149–52.

(48) *Hymn* 21.235–7.

(49) *Hymn* 21.238–46.

(50) *Hymn* 21.262;290–1.

(51) *Hymn* 21.302–11.

(52) *Hymn* 21.312–13.

(53) *Hymn* 21.391–2.

(54) Cf. Neyrand, *SC* 174. 155 (n. 2)

(55) See the discussion in chapter 7.

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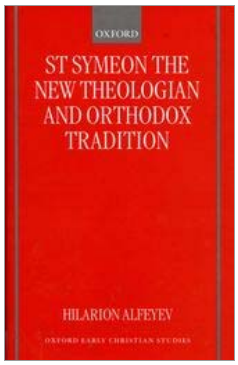

St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition
Hilarion Alfeyev

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Symeon's Theology as Based on that of the Church Fathers

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Source: and Orthodox TraditionHilarion Alfeyev
Author(s):

Hilarion Alfeyev

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Abstract and Keywords

Ascetical and mystical themes predominate in the literary heritage of Symeon the New Theologian, but he also discusses many theological themes. This chapter points out the most indicative items of similarity between Symeon's teaching about God and that of preceding Fathers, with the goal of defining his place among Eastern Christian theologians. Symeon quoted Gregory Nazianzen much more often than any other church writer. For Symeon, as for Orthodox tradition in general, Gregory was 'the theologian' in the proper sense, true Christian theology personified. By assigning the name of 'New Theologian' to Symeon, Orthodox tradition suggested the continuity of theological approach between him and Gregory Nazianzen. Symeon's indebtedness to Gregory is particularly clear in his teaching on God within Himself and in His revelation to humankind, which, for all its vividness, might well be expounded as based on Gregory's theological doctrine, and, through the latter, on Orthodox tradition. This chapter also looks at the views of Gregory and Symeon with regards to divine names, the incomprehensibility of God, and apophaticism.

Keywords: Symeon the New Theologian, Gregory Nazianzen, God, Orthodox tradition, Christian theology, incomprehensibility, apophaticism, divine names

Ascetical and mystical themes predominate in the literary heritage of Symeon; however, he also discusses many theological themes.[1] This chapter will proceed by pointing out the most indicative items of similarity between his teaching about God and that of preceding Fathers. This investigation will help us to define Symeon's place among Eastern Christian theologians.

As was remarked above, Symeon quoted Gregory Nazianzen much more often than any other church writer. This is

not surprising if we take into account that Gregory was, in fact, 'the most cited author, after the Bible, in Byzantine ecclesiastical literature'.[2] For Symeon, as for Orthodox tradition in general, Gregory was 'the theologian' in the proper sense,[3] true Christian theology personified. By assigning the name of 'New Theologian' to Symeon, Orthodox tradition suggested the continuity of theological approach between Symeon and Gregory Nazianzen. Symeon's indebtedness to Gregory is particularly clear in his teaching on God within Himself and in His revelation to humankind, which, for all its vividness, might well be expounded as based on Gregory's theological doctrine, and, through the latter, on Orthodox tradition. In this section, when clarifying the links between Symeon and preceding Fathers, particular attention will be paid to the parallels between the two Theologians, Symeon and Gregory.

(p. 156) 1. The True Theologian

Symeon directly follows Gregory when raising the question of what the true theologian must be. This theme is discussed by both authors in the context of their triadological polemic. Gregory says that it is not allowed for everyone to 'philosophize about God', but only for those who live in contemplation, who purify their souls and bodies, and who have their mind free from any evil thoughts.[4] The theologian, according to Gregory, must be pure, 'so that the Light is comprehended by light'; we may philosophize about God only when there is silence within us, and only 'as far as we comprehend and are ourselves comprehended'.[5] The theologian must possess the Spirit, because only with His help may one think, speak, and hear about God; and only those who are pure and similar to God can touch upon the Pure.[6]

Symeon discusses this theme using the same ideas and expressions as Gregory. He begins his *Theol.* 1 by suggesting that 'it would be the sign of a rash and presumptuous soul to speak or discourse about God, or to try to express what cannot be expressed, or understand what for all people is beyond understanding'.[7] In *Theol.* 2 he attacks those who dare to theologize without having seen God and having received the grace of the Spirit:

> When I hear about some who philosophize on divine and inaccessible matters and theologize in a state of uncleanness and expound on God and what relates to Him without the Spirit who makes us understand things, my spirit trembles, and I am beside myself, contemplating and thinking about how totally incomprehensible is the Godhead, and how we, who do not even know what lies under our feet and what we ourselves are, with boldness wish to philosophize about God without any fear...![8]

Who, then, are able to theologize? Those, Symeon answers in 'Hymn 21', who have received true understanding through the Spirit, 'who are poor in spirit and life, who are pure of heart and of body, who have simple speech and simpler life, and a way of thought that is yet simpler still',[9] who are 'enlightened by the light' of the Spirit.[10] Until one's soul has been cleansed and the heart purified, the spiritual **(p. 157)** eye opened and the mind counted worthy to see the light, until one has perceived the sweetness of the Godhead and has found Christ within oneself, one should not 'philosophize or speak about what has to do with the Spirit', Symeon concludes.[11]

2. The Incomprehensibility of God

Another leitmotiv of both Gregory and Symeon was the theme of the incomprehensibility of God, which was extensively discussed by many Christian authors.[12] Questioning Plato's suggestion that 'it is difficult to comprehend God, and it is impossible to express Him',[13] Gregory argues that 'it is impossible to express God, and it is even more impossible to comprehend Him'.[14] This is, in fact, a starting point of Gregory's theological approach, which might, therefore, be defined as initially apophatic.[15] God is incomprehensible in His essence (*οὐσία*), though we know about His existence from the comprehension of the created world.[16] The following famous passage from 'Discourse 38'[17] contains a résumé of Gregory's understanding of the incomprehensibility of God, which in his theological thought is connected with the doctrine of the deification of man:

> God possesses concentrated in Himself the entirety of being [*τὸ εἶναι*] without beginning and without termination, like an ocean of substance[*πέλαγος οὐσίας*] limitless and indefinite, which surpasses any idea of either time or nature. Only the intellect [*νοῦς*] might roughly depict Him, however, in some obscure and mediocre manner, and not in His nature, but in what is around Him, joining certain elements of representation in one image of truth, which runs away before you can overtake it, and which escapes before you can comprehend it; which enlightens our intellect [*ἡγεμονικόν*] if it is purified, in the same manner as the speed of lightning enlightens our sight. I think that this is in order to attract us to God by something that is attainable, since what is totally unattainable cannot be an object of hope and attention, **(p. 158)** and in order

> to precipitate an admiration by what is unattainable, and to cause greater desire by being admired, and to purify by the desire, and to make divine by purification; and, when we have already become deified, to speak with us as God Who is united with gods and comprehended by them and known by them as also He knows those whom He knows [1 Cor. 13: 12].[18]

Gregory, therefore, insists on the radical incomprehensibility of God, Who might be, however, somewhat 'imagined' by the intellect, though only partly. The nature of God is thoroughly unattainable, or rather He is beyond the very idea of nature; at the same time there is something attainable in God. The way by which the intellect approaches to the comprehension of the divine, then, consists of several steps: admiration, desire, purification, enlightening, deification, knowledge of God as He is.

We find the same approach to the incomprehensibility of God in Symeon,[19] who always emphasizes, using apophatic vocabulary, that God is 'inexpressible, without beginning, uncreated, incomprehensible, undivided and unattainable for our thought or speech'.[20] If ancient theologians discussed divine things, they did this in order to destroy heretical blasphemies and not to explain the divine nature.[21] Accordingly, Scripture does not reveal to us what God is, but only testifies that He eternally exists.[22] Following Gregory, Symeon compares God with 'a great ocean and sea of seas' (*πέλαγος μέγα καὶ θάλασσα θαλασσῶν*) which is so limitless that there is no way to comprehend it in its entirety.[23] Like Gregory, Symeon describes God as light that escapes as soon as you seem to have attained it:

> When having the light, you do not actually have it,
> For you have it, since you see it,
> But you cannot hold it
> Or grasp it in your hands...
> You imagine that you possess it...
> But, as you close your hands,
> The light becomes impossible to be held [*ἀκράτητος*],
> And so you again have nothing.[24]

(p. 159) Symeon also echoes Gregory when suggesting that there is a wall between us and God: it is built by our sins and can be destroyed only by repentance; until it is destroyed, we are unable not only to comprehend God, but also to understand our own human nature.[25]

However, in spite of the incomprehensibility of God, we are not left in total darkness and ignorance. On the contrary, Symeon continues, it is granted to us to speak about God as far as our human nature allows, so as not to forget Him completely because of too long silence.[26] God is 'unattainably attainable' only to the human intellect (*νοῦς*),[27] and He has allowed us 'to see dimly realities which are beyond us, as though in a shadow'.[28] Our knowledge of God is proportionate to our faith.[29] The faithful receive the knowledge of God by many different means:

> by enigmas, by mirrors, by mystical and inexpressible energies, by divine revelations, by veiled illuminations, by the contemplation of the principles of creation [*διὰ θεωρίας τῶν λόγων τῆς κτίσεως*],[30] and by many other means, by which their faith grows day by day and rises up to the love of God.[31]

Thus, always insisting that God is essentially incomprehensible and unknowable, Symeon claims at the same time that there is something comprehensible in God. This approach is in fact traditional to the Eastern Church. Deriving from the great Fathers of the fourth century, it had been developed throughout the whole of the history of Byzantine theological thought and was finally acknowledged as a dogma in the fourteenth century, when it was defended with particular zeal by Gregory Palamas. According to the latter, God is incomprehensible in His essence, but can be comprehended in His energies, which are not different in nature from Him, nor are they emanations from His essence (in a Platonic sense), but 'are God Himself in His action and revelation to the world'.[32] In Gregory Nazianzen we find a distinction between God's essence and energies.[33] According to Basil the Great, 'we know our God from His **(p. 160)** energies, but we do not claim that we can draw near to His essence. For His energies come down to us, but His essence remains unapproachable'.[34]

In Symeon we find a distinction between what is totally incomprehensible in God, i.e. His 'nature' (*φύσις*) or 'essence' (*οὐσία*); and what can be comprehended by man—the 'mystical contemplations through illumination by the

Holy Spirit and unknowable knowledge [*ἄγνωστοι γνώσεις*], that is, invisible contemplations [*ἀθέατοι θεωρίαι*]; of the super-bright and super-unknowable glory and Godhead of the Son and Word of God'.[35] Terminologically Symeon's doctrine of the essence and energies of God is not as consistent as that of Gregory Palamas: we can notice some kind of instability in the usage of the terms 'nature' and 'essence' in him.[36] However, the actual doctrine the New Theologian expressed was close to that of Gregory Palamas, which was, in turn, a synthesis of a patristic approach to the incomprehensibility of God.

What is particularly noteworthy is that Symeon lays strong emphasis on the paradox between the radical incomprehensibility of God and human capability to comprehend the Incomprehensible One; this two-edged phenomenon is what Symeon is constantly astonished at. In 'Hymn 23' Symeon speaks in God's person:

> Since I am unattainable, I am not inside the creatures,
> But since I am attainable, I am not outside them,
> And because I am uncircumscribed,
> I am neither inside nor outside...
> **(p. 161)**
> I bear all in Me
> Since I maintain every creature,
> And I am outside of everything
> Since I am separated from everything...
> If you seek Me spiritually,
> You will discover Me as being unlimited,
> And hence in this respect nowhere,
> Either inside or outside...[37]

Therefore, Symeon understands God as a paradoxical mystery, which is totally incomprehensible for human thought, yet at the same time can be revealed to those who are deified: however even in its revelation it still remains beyond comprehension.

3. The Divine Names

The best known exposition of Christian teaching on the divine names is contained in the tract of Dionysios the Areopagite.[38] However, chronologically Gregory Nazianzen was among the first Christian authors to express this theory with great clarity.[39] Gregory when speaking of the divine names starts from the point that 'the Godhead is nameless' (*τὸ θεῖον ἀκατονόμαστον*—literally, 'unnameable'),[40] since its nature is incomprehensible. The human mind is not able to contain God, nor the human voice to express Him:[41] this is why there is no word or name in human language which would be worthy of Him. However, to describe Him somehow, the theologians borrow characteristics from 'what is around Him' (*τὰ κατ' αὐτόν*), and build a vague and weak image (*φαντασία*) of Him using human words.[42] Dionysios might therefore have had Gregory in mind when saying that 'the theologians praise [God] as nameless [*ἀνώνυμον*] and at the same time possessing all namess [*ἐκ παντὸς ὀνόματος*]'.[43] Both Gregory and Dionysios give a list of the divine names,[44] and the first specially **(p. 162)** emphasizes that the name of 'love' is the most pleasing to God Himself.[45]

As to Symeon, he suggests that all names and expressions came into the world from God, and people are given the capability to name creatures; but the name of God Himself is not known to us, apart from the name of *ὁ ὤν ἄφραστος Θεός* ('God the inexpressible one').[46] For Symeon the namelessness and inexpressibility of God are a consequence of the incomprehensibility of His nature. Appealing to God in his 'Mystical Prayer', which is the prose introduction to the corpus of 'Hymns', Symeon says: 'Come, nameless [*ἀκατονόμαστος*] treasure...Come, O beloved Name, repeated everywhere; yet it is absolutely forbidden for us to express who You are, and to know what You are or of what kind.'[47] The nature of God is totally unfathomable (*ἀνερμήνευτος*), and not a single person has ever known the name, or nature, or image, or form, or substance of God.[48]

At the same time Symeon employs many terms to name God, and images to express His qualities. If we compare the list of divine names in Symeon's 'Mystical Prayer' with the lists produced by Gregory and Dionysios, we will find that there are names which are common to all three authors, and there are some occurring only in Symeon:

> Come, true light. Come, life eternal. Come, hidden mystery. Come, nameless treasure. Come, ineffable reality. Come, inconceivable Person [*πρόσωπον*]. Come, eternal delight. Come, never-setting light. Come, unfailing hope…Come, resurrection of the dead. Come, O mighty One…Come, O invisible One, entirely intangible and imperceptible. Come, You who always remain motionless and yet at each moment move entirely…Come, eternal joy. Come, lustrous crown. Come, purple robe of the great **(p. 163)** God and our King. Come, crystalline belt, sparkling with precious stones. Come, inaccessible sandal. Come, royal purple and the right hand of the Sovereign.[49]

Such names as 'light', 'eternal life', 'the mighty One', 'the invisible One', 'resurrection of the dead' are traditional and based on biblical and liturgical usage. But Symeon does not seem to be satisfied with the established set of epithets and produces his own list, which includes unusual but poetic names, such as 'crown', 'sandal', 'belt'. These names, as well as many other divine names and epithets which we find in Symeon's writings and do not find in other Fathers,[50] are engendered by Symeon's personal attitude to the Godhead, which needed to be expressed through a full range of names and images.

Another list of the divine names is contained in 'Hymn 45', where Symeon speaks of the vision of God as light:

> This One, when it appears, when it shines and illumines,
> When it is participated in and given, is all good things;
> This is why we call it not by one, but by many names:
> Light, peace, joy, life, food, drink,
> Clothes, veil, tabernacle, divine house,
> East, resurrection, rest and bath,
> Fire, water, spring, the source of life and stream,
> Bread and wine, the new delight of the faithful,
> Banquet, enjoyment which we mystically enjoy,
> The sun that is indeed without sunset, the star that shines eternally,
> The lamp that enlightens the house of the soul.[51]

In this list, three groups of divine names can be discerned: those implying the Eucharist ('food', 'drink', 'bread', 'wine', 'banquet'), those connected with baptismal imagery ('clothes', 'bath', 'water', 'spring') and those referring to the mysticism of light ('light', 'east', 'fire', 'sun', 'star', 'lamp'). All the three groups reflect the experience of the human participation in the Godhead: Baptism, Eucharist, and mystical vision of light are the three main dimensions of this experience. In general, Symeon's list of the divine names is close to the Dionysian, which also enumerates the terms 'life', 'light', 'source of life', 'sun', 'star', 'fire', 'water' among the names of God.[52] However, **(p. 164)** the 'experiential' origin of the divine names is especially characteristic of Symeon: if in Dionysios the nameless Godhead obtains its names when being 'praised by the theologians' *οἱ θεολόγοι…αὐτὴν ὑμνοῦσι*),[53] in Symeon it becomes nameable when it 'appears, shines, and illumines' and when it is 'participated and given'.

A similar choice of names of God we find in the following passage, which is addressed to Christ and is full of lyricism:[54]

> You are the kingdom of heaven, You are the land of those who are meek,
> O Christ [cf. Matt. 5: 5],
> You are the grassy paradise, You are the divine bridal chamber,
> You are an ineffable chamber, You are a table for all [cf. Matt. 22: 2 ff.],
> You are the bread of life [cf. John 6: 35], You are the newest drink,[55]
> You are the source of water, You are the water of life [cf. Apoc. 21: 6],
> You are a lamp inextinguishable for each of the saints,
> You are a tunic and crown and the Giver of crowns,[56]
> You are joy and rest, You are delight and glory,
> You are gladness and happiness…[57]

Here we see again how Symeon uses names of biblical and liturgical origin, alternating them with those produced by his own pen. Comparing the passage quoted with the names of Christ in Gregory Nazianzen's fourth 'Theological

Discourse', we see that, unlike Symeon, Gregory deliberately limits himself to names of biblical origin.[58] However, in Gregory's poetry, in particular, in the 'Hymn to Christ After Silence on Easter', we find some less traditional names of Christ, such as *πατροφαές* ('the light of the Father'), *υἱόγονς* ('the begotten Son'), *ὀλβιόδωρος* ('possessing blessed gifts'), *ἆσθμα νόον* ('the breath of the intellect'), *φερέσβιος* ('the bearer of life') etc.[59] The main difference between Gregory and Symeon, as far as their poetic vocabulary of the names of God is concerned, is that Gregory uses a rather exalted vocabulary and is certainly inspired by classical **(p. 165)** Greek poetry, whereas Symeon seems not to be conditioned by any literary source or poetic style.

An interesting observation might be made concerning Symeon's use of the term 'love' as a divine name. If Gregory the Theologian regards this name as the one most pleasing to God Himself, Symeon expresses the idea that 'love' is not even a name, but the very essence of a nameless God, which is incomprehensible and comprehensible at the same time:

> All that is incomprehensible [in God] ignites my love [*πόθος*],
> And all that is comprehensible is personified love [*ἐνυόστατος πόθος*].
> For love [*ἀγάπη*] is not a name, but the divine essence [*οὐσία θεία*],
> Both participable and yet incomprehensible, but totally divine.[60]

Therefore, love as the mystical essence of God is totally incomprehensible, but when being 'personified', it 'communicates itself' and is comprehensible.[61]

To summarize Symeon's theory of the divine names, we can recall Nikitas Stithatos, who, in his 'Introduction' to Symeon's 'Hymns', provides us with the following reflections:

> Thus...one must judiciously examine the ecstasy and deification of this divine Father...and [see] how he, possessed with the desire of God [*ἔρωτι κάτοχος τοῦ Θεοῦ*] and as if wounded by His love [*ἀγάπης*], called Him and named by many different divine titles, imitating in this respect the great Dionysios...Our divine Father Symeon, as a wise theologian, praises the divine and supernatural nature as both nameless [*ἀνώνυμον*] and possessing all names [*παντὸς ὀνόματος ὀνομαζομένου*]...[62]

Indicating that Symeon belongs to the same tradition as Dionysios in his usage of the different names of God, Nikitas shows that the richness and variety of this usage is due to the fact that Symeon himself was 'possessed with the desire' and 'wounded by the love' of God. The question is, therefore, not so much about the 'imitation' of Dionysios by Symeon as about the conformity of Symeon's theology and experience to the theology and experience of preceding Fathers.

(p. 166) 4. Apophatic Approach

As has been mentioned above, Symeon widely employed apophatic terminology in his writings.

Theological apophaticism, the theory of which was expounded by the Areopagite,[63] but which was in fact characteristic of Eastern Christian writers of every age,[64] derives from the idea of the total incomprehensibility of God. The main principle of apophatic theology is the following: if there is no positive word to define the divine, one should speak about God in the negative and describe Him through contraries.[65] Apophatic language is an attempt to show 'by means of language that which lies beyond language'.[66] It has a mystical nature: it is employed by the Fathers mostly when the question is, using A. Louth's expression, about the 'secret relationship between the soul and God', or about 'the soul's movement *inwards* to God'.[67] If cataphatic theology deals with what we can affirm about God deriving from His actions, apophatic theology reflects such a mystical state 'when, in the presence of God, speech and thought fail us and we are reduced to silence'.[68]

Terminologically apophaticism is usually expressed in four different ways: 1. through direct negation, that is, using terms with the prefixes *ἀ-*, *ἀν-* (non-, un-, in-, -less); 2. using the superlative degree, especially terms with the prefix *ὑπερ-* (super-); 3. using oxymorons—statements in which one word contradicts another; 4. using paradoxical assertions, the meaning of which would be the opposite of what is actually said.[69] Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, Dionysios the Areopagite, and Maximos the Confessor were the four authors who, before Symeon, used apophatic terminology more extensively than other church Fathers.

(p. 167) The writings by the Areopagite are, of course, the best known and the classic example of developed apophatic terminology: we can find there all the terminological types listed above.[70] Dionysios speaks of God in negative and superlative terms when calling Him *ἄγνωστος* (unknown), *ἀκατάληπτος* (immeasurable), *ἀκατονόμαστος* (unnameable), *ἄληπτος* (unattainable), *ἀμέθεκτος* (imparticipable), *ἀνώνυμος* (nameless), *ἀόρατος* (invisible), *ἄπειρος* (limitless), *ὑπεράγαθος* (super-good), *ὑπεράγνωστος* (super-unknown), *ὑπεράῤῥητος* (super-inexpressible), *ὑπερούσιος* (super-existing), *ὑπέρφωτος* (super-radiant), and even *ὑπέρθεος* (supra-god).[71] He widely employs oxymorons, such as 'super-bright darkness',[72] 'super-existing existence';[73] and paradoxical assertions, such as 'being pronounced remains inexpressible, and being comprehended remains unknown',[74] or 'to see and comprehend through invisibility and incomprehensibility'.[75]

Comparing Symeon's apophatic vocabulary with the Dionysian,[76] we find that it is very close to the latter, but is significantly richer as far as negative terminology is concerned, while being more reserved in the usage of superlatives. Symeon employs almost all the Areopagitic negative terms, and adds some negatives which are either his own or borrowed from other (non-Areopagitic) writings, such as *ἀκατανόητος* (inconceivable),[77] *ἀκράτητος* (impossible to grasp),[78] *ἀμαράντινος* or *ἀμάραντος* (unfading),[79] *ἀμετακίνητος* (immutable),[80] *ἀναμάρτητος* (sinless),[81] *ἀνεκλάλητος, ἀνέκφραστος, ἀνεκφώνητος,* **(p. 168)** *ἀνερμήνευτος* (inexpressible),[82] *ἀνυπερήφανος* (non-arrogant),[83] and many others.

Among the superlatives which we find in Symeon, there are *ὑπεράναρχος* (super-eternal)[84] *ὑπερδεδοξασμένος* (super-glorified)[85] *ὑπερευλογημένος* (super-blessed),[86] *ὑπερεύσπλαγχνος* (super-compassion-ate),[87] *ὑπερπλήρης* (super-full),[88] and a few others.

Symeon's usage of oxymorons in quite extensive. He speaks of 'sensation beyond sensation',[89] 'knowledge beyond knowledge',[90] 'motionlessly moving mind',[91] 'life-giving mortification',[92] 'insensible sensation', 'bodiless body',[93] 'incomprehensible comprehension', 'unimaginable image'.[94] The language of the 'Hymns' is especially rich in oxymorons: we find there 'measure of the immeasurable',[95] 'attainably unattainable',[96] 'unmixable mixture',[97] 'the beginning of the one who is without beginning',[98] 'unchangeably changing',[99] 'separated without separation',[100] 'to see without vision',[101] 'to express unspeakable words',[102] and others.

When reading Symeon, one finds here and there paradoxical assertions which are to be understood only in the context of the apophatic tradition. Symeon speaks of the spiritual sun, which 'is completely present everywhere, yet never completely anywhere'.[103] He appeals to God, 'Who always remains motionless and at each moment moves completely.'[104] Symeon develops the Dionysian idea of the equality of opposite terms, such as knowledge-ignorance, light-darkness, perception-insensibility, when the question is about God or the experience of man's participation in the divine:

> The increase of our knowledge of God becomes the cause and the reason of our ignorance of all other things, even of God Himself; and the immensity of His light leads to a total darkening of vision; and the perception which **(p. 169)** transcends everything is itself beyond perception, and so it becomes insensible to everything which is outside it.[105]

We see that, though Symeon did not speak of the superiority of apophatic language over cataphatic, his use of the former in theological themes was quite wide. This is due to the mystical character of his theology, to his very strong awareness of the incomprehensibility of God, and to his experience of 'immediacy with God', which he felt was difficult to express in positive terms. In this Symeon is generally close to preceding mystical authors, such as Gregory of Nyssa, Dionysios, and Maximos the Confessor, without, however, being directly dependent on any of them.

5. God as Light

Symeon's special interest in the notion of God as light is due to his experience of the vision of light, which will be discussed in Chapter 10. Here our main task is to analyse the patristic roots of this theological notion, which derives from John the Evangelist,[106] and which was developed by a number of church Fathers before Symeon, especially by Gregory Nazianzen. This is, therefore, a point at which there is a direct link between the three 'Theologians': John, Gregory, and Symeon.

For Gregory the theme of divine light was of great importance: the very nature of God is characterized by him as

'light', in preference to all other terms.[107] Gregory created a special 'terminology of light', which appears in his early works[108] and accompanies him throughout the whole of his life and literary activity.[109] Gregory expresses his theory of the divine light with particular clarity in his 'Discourses' 38–40, which were, not surprisingly, very much appreciated by Symeon the New Theologian, who referred to them over twenty times.[110] The following passage from *Disc.* 40 may serve as a summary of Gregory's doctrine of God as light: **(p. 170)**

> God is the light supreme, unapproachable and ineffable, which is incomprehensible for the intellect and unutterable for speech, which enlightens all rational nature. He is in the intelligible world what the sun is in the sensible world; He is imaginable in proportion as we are purified, and loved in proportion as we imagine Him, and conceived in proportion as we love Him. He contemplates and comprehends Himself, pouring out a little [of Himself] to what is external to Him. I mean the light which is contemplated in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit...[111]

Continuing, Gregory says that the second light after God is an angel,[112] and the third light is a man; there is also the light of the created world. Light is the commandment of God (Gen. 2: 16–17), the Law of Sinai (Exod. 34: 29–35), the Burning Bush (Exod. 3: 2), the cloud of fire for Israel (Exod. 13: 21); light is what caught up Elijah in the fiery chariot (2 Kings 2: 11) and what enlightened the shepherds when Christ was born (Luke 2: 9); light is the star which led the magi to Bethlehem (Matt. 2: 9); light is the Godhead which was revealed to the Apostles at the Transfiguration (Matt. 17: 2); light is what enlightened Paul on his way to Damascus (Acts 9: 3); light is the brightness of the age to come, when 'the righteous will shine forth as the sun [Matt. 13: 43] and God will stand among them, gods and kings'. The sacrament of Baptism is also light and the beginning of our salvation.[113]

Now, the resemblance between this doctrine and what Symeon says of the divine light is striking. In his *Theol.* 3 we read:

> God is light, a light infinite and incomprehensible...The Father is light, the Son is light, and the Holy Spirit is light; the three are one single light,[114] simple, non-composite, timeless, eternal, possessed of the same honour and glory. Moreover, all that comes from Him is light...Life is light; immortality is light; the source of life is light; the living water is light; love, peace, truth, the door of the kingdom of heaven, and the very kingdom of heaven are light...For there is one God in Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the light inaccessible, pre-existing the ages...I have been taught this by men who have learned it from their own experience...[115]

(p. 171) Symeon constantly returns to the assertion that God the Trinity is one incomprehensible light: this idea is the foundation stone of his theology and mysticism.[116] All the divine attributes are also described by Symeon as light: he speaks about the light of God's glory,[117] of divine grace,[118] of Christ's face,[119] of divine love,[120] of knowledge,[121] of Scripture,[122] of eternal life,[123] of immortality,[124] of dispassion,[125] of divine commandments,[126] etc.

Symeon often compares God with the sun, recalling the analogy which became traditional in patristic usage, and before that in Greek philosophy.[127] Developing Gregory's concept of the two suns in the two worlds, Symeon writes:

> God in the beginning created two worlds, visible and invisible...in which the two suns shine, one sensible and another intelligible; and what the sun is for the visible and sensible world, that God is for the invisible and intelligible...The sensible world and everything in it are enlightened by this visible sun, whereas another, namely intelligible, world and everything in it are enlightened and illumined by the intelligible Sun of righteousness [cf. Mal. 4: 2].[128]

(p. 172) Symeon regards the whole of the history of the world as one unceasing revelation of God as light. The divine light created angels,[129] who are 'second lights'.[130] Though the divine light is completely transcendent to the visible world, God did not leave the latter without any light, but created the sun, the moon, and fire.[131] Man was created after God's image and likeness, as a 'second world' (*δεύτερος κόσμος*),[132] and was clothed in the 'light-filled and divine clothes', which he lost afterwards.[133] The Son of God became man, so that we, through our conformity to and participation in Him as light, become 'second lights' who are similar to the first light.[134] All these ideas we have already met in Gregory Nazianzen; we note, therefore, that both the cosmology and anthropology of Symeon, as those of Gregory, are permeated with the idea of divine light.

Like Gregory, Symeon frequently refers to the experience of biblical personages, in particular Moses, Elijah, Paul, Stephen, as well as to certain important episodes, such as the story of the Burning Bush, the Transfiguration of Christ, and others: some of these personages and episodes were mentioned by us when discussing Symeon's biblical approach.[135] The idea that God is light for the righteous and fire for sinners, which is reflected in Symeon, also derives from Gregory.[136] Together with the latter, Symeon establishes a link between the sacrament of Baptism and the divine light when insisting that those who have been clothed in Christ must 'contemplate His light in the light of the Holy Spirit [cf. Ps. 35/36: 9]'.[137] Symeon also develops the suggestion that the divine light shines in deified persons 'in proportion' (*κατὰ ἀναλογίαν*) to their purification and love:

(p. 173)

> You, inaccessible sun, will shine among the saints,
> And all will be enlightened in proportion
> To their faith, deeds, hope, love,
> Purification, and illumination by Your Spirit.[138]

Finally, it should be mentioned that, though the apophatic approach and terminology were very much appreciated by Symeon, he did not usually describe the divine light in terms of 'darkness' (*γνόφος*). Among the great mystical writers it was Philo, Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, and Dionysios who widely employed this symbolism,[139] whereas Gregory Nazianzen was more attracted by the symbolism of light. For Dionysios, the 'unapproachable light where God is said to live' (cf. 1 Tim. 6: 16) is terminologically equal to the 'divine darkness',[140] since God is, in fact, beyond any human idea of what the light is.[141] The ascent of Moses to God finishes with the entry into the 'mysterious darkness of unknowing', where he, 'wrapped entirely in the intangible and invisible, belongs completely to the One Who is beyond everything'.[142]

Symeon is one of those theologians in whom 'the theology of darkness…will give way to a theology of the uncreated light':[143] in this he is again comparable with Gregory Nazianzen. Symeon does mention 'divine darkness' in one of his most 'Areopagitic' passages:

> When the mind is simple, or rather stripped of all thoughts and completely clothed in the simple light of God…it remains in the depths of divine light and is not allowed to see anything outside. This is what the saying means: 'God is light, and the light supreme, and for all those who have achieved it, the repose of all contemplation'.[144] The intellect, which is always in motion, becomes motionless and empty of thought when it is completely covered by the divine darkness and light…Everything to do with this is incomprehensible, inexpressible and inconceivable…The mind then lives the life beyond life, and is light within light…[145]

(p. 174) This is, however, the only instance where we were able to find the 'divine darkness' mentioned by Symeon; and even in this passage it is placed together with 'light', and the theme of light entirely predominates.

Notes:

(1) Here and below in this chapter the word 'theology' is used in its narrow and original meaning: 'teaching about God'.

(2) Noret, 'Grégoire', 259.

(3) When quoting Gregory, Symeon sometimes refers to 'the theologian' without naming him: see *Cat*. 28. 417; *Eth*. 4. 801. It is again traditional for Byzantine literature to refer in this way to Gregory: Noret, 'Grégoire', 259.

(4) *Disc*. 27. 3. 1–13 [76].

(5) *Disc*. 28. 1. 1–8 [100].

(6) *Disc*. 2. 39. 3–6 [140]. For the fuller exposition of the theme of the true theologian in Gregory see Winslow, *Dynamics*, 23–43.

(7) *Theol*. 1. 1–4.

(8) *Theol*. 2. 35–43. Cf. Basil the Great, *Ep*. 235. 2. 13–31 [45–6].

(9) *Hymn* 21. 65–8.

(10) *Hymn* 21. 104.

(11) *Hymn* 21. 161–78.

(12) Cf., amongst others, Justin, *Apol*. 2. 6; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom*. 5.81. 2–5, 82. 4; Origen, *Princ*. 4. 3. 14; Basil the Great, *Evnom*. 1. 10; John Chrysostom, *Incomprehens*. The last writing was explicitly known to Symeon, who alludes to it seven times in his *Hymns* 19; 21; 29–31: see Turner, *Fatherhood*, 50.

(13) *Timaeus* 28c. (This quotation from Plato occurs very often in ancient Christian authors of the 2nd and 3rd centuries).

(14) *Disc*. 28. 4. 1–6 [107–8].

(15) Cf. Winslow, *Dynamics*, 28–9.

(16) *Disc*. 28. 5. 12–6. 8 [110].

(17) This discourse was definitely known to Symeon and quoted by him: see Turner, *Fatherhood*, 47.

(18) *Disc*. 38. 7. 5–22 [114–16].

(19) For the exposition of Symeon's treatment of the theme of the incomprehensibility of God see also Krivochéine, *Lighti* 185–98 ('The Unknowable God Made Manifest').

(20) *Theol*. 1. 139–41.

(21) *Theol*. 2. 247–51.

(22) *Theol*. 2. 257–60.

(23) *Hymn* 23. 283–94; *Theol*. 2. 263–73. Cf. the comparison of God with a boundless sea in Maximos the Confessor, *Love* 4. 1 [193].

(24) *Hymn* 23. 118–29.

(25) *Theol*. 1. 253–7.

(26) *Theol*. 1. 141–4.

(27) *Hymn* 23. 74–9.

(28) *Theol*. 1. 222–4.

(29) *Theol*. 1. 189–91.

(30) For the patristic background of Symeon's teaching on the contemplation of 'the principles of creation', i.e. comprehension of God through contemplation of the visible world, see Volker, *Praxis*, 313–15.

(31) *Theol*. 1. 194–200.

(32) Ware, *Church*, 68. This approach will be discussed once again in Chapter 10 (section on the vision of God). On Palamism and its distinction between God's essence and energies see Meyendorff, *Study*, 202–27; Lossky, *Myst. Theol*., 67–90; Deseille, 'Connaissance', 4; Pelikan, *Spirit*, 269–70; Ware, *Church*, 67–9. For the modern scholarly criticism of Palamism see Ivanka, *Plato*, 374–421.

(33) *Disc*. 29. 16. 12–23 [210–212]; Disc. 31. 5. 10 [284].

(34) *Ep*. 234. 1 [42].

(35) *Eth*. 3. 125–9. For the full exposition of Symeon's teaching on the divine essence and energies see Krivochéine, *Light*, 185–98; idem, 'Essence', 151–70.

(36) Symeon discusses, for example, whether the term 'essence' (*οὐσία*) is applicable to God, Who is totally beyond essence: *Hymn* 47. 37–42. The essence of God is, according to Symeon, 'super-essential' (*οὐσία ὑπερούσιος*): *Hymn* 31. 6–14. On the other hand, once Symeon claims that he sees God in His very nature (*φύσις*), cf. *Hymn* 52. 52; elsewhere he says that through the contemplation of God, his own substance is mixed with God's essence: *Hymn* 7. 25–7. However, as B. Krivochéine suggests, the inconsistency in the usage of certain terms does not mean, as far as Symeon's teaching on the divine essence and energies is concerned, that we are dealing with a real contradiction. 'Most of his "contradictions" may be explained by the paradoxical and intimate nature of Christian mystery, which is so difficult, if not impossible, to express in logical, consistent language, especially if this mystery is approached in a concrete, existential fashion, as in the case with Symeon': *Light*, 198; cf. 'Essence', 168–70. We must also take into account that the controversy concerning the distinction between God's nature and energies took place in Byzantium three centuries after Symeon, who was not engaged in any specific argument about this matter, and so did not need to be so precise.

(37) *Hymn* 23. 20–49.

(38) See *Div*. *Names*.

(39) See Alfeyev, *Zhizn*, 247–55. The theory of the divine names appeared in a quite developed form in all three Cappadocians. Apart from them, another great writer of the 4th century, Ephrem the Syrian, expressed the same theory in his own way: see Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 60–6 and 146–7. On the possible Syrian background of the Dionysian theory of the divine names see also Louth, *Denys*, 78–81.

(40) *Disc*. 30. 17. 1 [260].

(41) *Disc*. 30. 17. 9–10 [262].

(42) *Disc*. 30. 17. 11–13 [262].

(43) *Div*. *Names* 1. 6. 1–2 [118].

(44) Gregory in *Disc*. 30. 18. 1–30, 31 (the names of Christ) and Dionysios in *Div*. *Names* 1. 6–13. 3 (the names of God).

(45) *Disc*. 22. 4 [226].

(46) *Hymn* 21. 248–56 (Cf. Exocl. 3: 14). Cf. the idea of Gregory Nazianzen that the names ὁ ὢν ('the existing One') and θεὸς ('God') are names of divine substance: *Disc*. 30. 18 [62].

(47) *Myst.Prayer* 4–14. This text is inscribed (possibly, by Nikitas) as 'The Prayer to the Holy Spirit'; and the majority of scholars, including B. Krivochéine (see *Light*, 274–5), accept this attribution. However, the text itself ends with a doxology to the Holy Trinity, and there are some expressions which are applicable to Christ rather than to the Holy Spirit ('seeing You', 'eating You', 'drinking You', in lines 48–50, which usually relate in Symeon to the mystical vision of Christ or to the Eucharist). One may therefore think that the prayer as a whole is addressed to the Holy Trinity. Some expressions, however, relate to one of the three Hypostases: for example, 'the right hand of the Sovereign' definitely relates either to the Holy Spirit or to the Son, but not to the Father.

(48) *Hymn* 12. 37–9.

(49) *Myst*. *Prayer* 3–18.

(50) Cf. B. Krivochéine's observations concerning the term *ὁ ἀνυπερήφανος Θεός* ('the God without pride') in *"Ανυπεήφανος,'* 485 ff.

(51) *Hymn* 45. 29–39.

(52) Cf. *Div. Names* 1. 6 [118–19].

(53) Ibid. 1. 6 [118].

(54) Cf. the note of J. Koder in *SC* 156, 169.

(55) Cf. the *Canon of Pascha* by John of Damascus: 'Come, let us drink a new drink...' [*Pentecostarion*, 29].

(56) Cf. the image of crown in *Myst. Prayer* 15.

(57) *Hymn* 1. 132–40.

(58) His list of Christ's names is as follows: Son, the Only-begotten, Word, Wisdom, Power, Truth, Image, Light, Life, Truth, Sanctification, Redemption, Resurrection, Man, the Son of Man, Christ, Way, Door, Shepherd, Sheep, Lamb, High Priest, Melchizedek, the King of Salem, Peace, the King of Righteousness; *Disc.* 30. 20. 1–21. 31 [266–74].

(59) *Poes. hist.* 38 [1325–9].

(60) *Hymn* 52. 11–14.

(61) *Hymn* 52. 15–19.

(62) *Préface* 59–67 and 206–8. Cf. Dionysios, *Div. Names* 1. 6. 1–2 (see the quotation above).

(63) *See Myst. Theol.* 3 [146–7].

(64) Cf. Pelikan, *Spirit*, 258–9. For the patristic conception of apophatic theology see Hochstaffl, *Theologie*, 82–155; Gendle, *Approach*, 245–476.

(65) Cf. Pelikan, *Spirit*, 32.

(66) Turner, *Darkness*, 34.

(67) *Origins*, 177 (the italics by A. Louth). For the mystical nature of apophatic theology see ibid. 173 ff.

(68) Ibid. 165.

(69) Alfeyev, *Tainstvo*, 33. This classification of ours does not pretend to be exhaustive. One may regard terms with both superlative and negative prefixes (*ὑπεράῤῥητος*, super-unknowable; *ὑπεράῤῥητος*, super-unspeakable) as belonging to two separate categories. On the other hand, one may reduce our third and fourth categories to one, joining paradoxical assertions and oxymorons into one group.

(70) We find a difference between the Areopagite and Gregory Nazianzen in their attitude to apophatic theology. Both accept apophaticism as a possible way to make cataphatic theological statements balanced, and both widely use apophatic terminology. However, Dionysios stresses the theoretical superiority of apophatic theology, which is defined as an ascent from the lower to the higher, whereas cataphaticism is a descent from the higher to the lower: see *Myst. Theol.* 2 [145]. Gregory, on the contrary, insists that cataphaticism is more practical: 'it is much easier and shorter to express the matter by saying what it is, rather than to show what it is by saying what it is not'; *Disc.* 28. 9. 30–2 [118–20]. See Alfeyev, *Zhizn*, 227–9.

(71) For the full list of terms see *PTS* 36. 269–76; 297–8.

(72) *Myst. Theol.* 2 [145].

(73) *Div. Names* 5. 1 [180].

(74) *Ep.* 3, [159].

(75) *Myst. Theol.* 2 [145].

(76) Cf. Fraigneau-Julien, *Sens*, 100 ff.

(77) *Hymn* 20. 227; 31. 31; 47. 38. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Cat. Or.* [62].

(78) *Hymn* 23. 79; 26. 38.

(79) Accordingly *Myst. Prayer* 15 and *Hymn* 48. no. Cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *Horn. Luke* 23. 27 [936 C].

(80) *Myst. Prayer* 10; 48;*Hymn* 22. 60. Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Ped.* 1. 9 [140]; Gregory of Nyssa, *Prayer* 2 [23].

(81) *Hymn* 36. 13; 36. 54.

(82) Accordingly *Hymn* 1. 6; *Hymn* 4. 41;*Myst. Prayer* 5;*Hymn* 23. 5. These four terms are equivalent of Dionysian ἄῤῥητος (inexpressible), which is also used by Symeon: *Hymn* 1. 6; 20. 242; 36. 59.

(83) *Euch.* 1. 158.

(84) *Hymn* 23. 10.

(85) *Hymn* 24. 198.

(86) *Hymn* 47. 2.

(87) *Hymn* 50. 90.

(88) *Hymn* 31. 70.

(89) *Cap.* 2. 2.

(90) *Cap.* 2. 13–17.

(91) *Cap.* 2. 18.

(92) *Cat.* 28, title.

(93) *Eth.*1. 21–2.

(94) cf. *Eth.* 4. 855–60.

(95) *Hymn* 1. 182.

(96) *Hymn* 23. 77; cf. 23. 80; 23. 104; 23. 154.

(97) Cf. *Hymn* 23. 155; 30. 156; 30. 426; 31. 136.

(98) *Hymn* 23. 9.

(99) Cf. *Hymn 26.* 45; 51. 97.

(100) *Hymn* 18. 41; 19. 28.

(101) *Hymn* 50. 34.

(102) *Hymn* 21. 295. Cf. 2 Cor. 12: 4

(103) *Cap.* 2. 25.

(104) *Myst. Prayer* 11–12.

(105) *Cap.* 2. 2.

(106) Cf., for example, 1 John 1:5. For the analysis of the Johannine concept of God as light see Dodd, *Gospel*, 201–6, 345–61. For the patristic doctrine of God as light (especially that of Origen and Athanasios) see Pelikan, *Light*, 21–36.

(107) Moreschini, *SC* 358. 63.

(108) See *Disc.* 2. 5. 14–15 [94]: 'God the most shining and resplendent.'

(109) Moreschini, *SC* 356. 63; idem, 'Luce', 53 5–42. For a fuller account of this theme in Gregory see Alfeyev, *Zhizn*, 3 5 5–62.

(110) Turner, *Fatherhood*, 47.

(111) 5. 1–8 [204].

(112) Cf. also *Disc.* 38. 9. 7 [120].

(113) *Disc.* 40. 5. 10–6. 28 [204–8].

(114) Cf. Maximos the Conferssor, *Quest.* 8. 15–18 [77]. 'God and the Father is light in the light, that is, of the Son and the Holy Spirit...[They are] one and the same, being thrice-shining (τρισσοφαές) according to the mode of existence.'

(115) *Theol.* 3. 137–66. The mention of people with an experience of divine light might well refer to Symeon the Studite or more generally to the continuity of Orthodox tradition and to those theologians who, like Gregory Nazianzen, developed the theme of God as light. Symeon, therefore, emphasizes that the theology of light is based on their personal experience.

(116) See especially *Hymn* 33. 1–13, and also *Hymn* 1. 226; 2. 91; 12. 15–34; 38. 24–32; *Cap.* 1. 2; *Eth.* 10. 374–7. For the fuller exposition of Symeon's doctrine of God as 'light in three Hypostases' see Volker, *Praxis*, 315–20.

(117) *Eth.* 11. 331; *Hymn* 1. 210; 7. 5; 21. 1–2; 31. 49; 45. 82.

(118) *Hymn* l2. 19.

(119) *Hymn* 9. 5; 25. 149; 28. 187.

(120) *Hymn* 10. 14; 17. 326; 18. 13.

(121) *Cat.* 26. 315; *Cap.* 1. 65; 2. 16; *Eth.* 5. 248–57; *Hymn* 32. 65; 55. 186.

(122) *Eth.* 7. 29.

(123) *Hymn* 27. 147; cf. 52. 99.

(124) *Hymn* 2. 89.

(125) *Hymn* 46. 38.

(126) *Eth.* 9. 142–4; *Hymn* 47. 3.

(127) *Cap.* 2. 22–5; *Hymn* 1. 9–20 and many other passages (especially in the *Hymns*). On the Platonic background of the comparison between God and the sun in Gregory Nazianzen see Moreschini, 'Platonismo', 1260 ff.

(128) *Cap*. 2. 22. Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc*. 21. 1. 13–15 [112] ('What the sun is for sensual creatures, God is for spiritual ones; the first enlightens the visible world, the second enlightens the invisible'). It has been stated that Symeon's 'belief that God created two worlds...takes us a long way along the path toward dualism': Garsoian, 'Heresy', 108. N. Garsoian seems to conflate the contrast between sensible and intelligible worlds, which is traditional for patristic literature, with the dualist contrast between good and evil. Symeon does speak elsewhere of the two ways which are available for people, i.e. the way towards God and that towards evil: cf. *Eth*. 11. 560–81. This is, however, a very traditional idea which derives from the Bible and early Christian writings: cf. Deut. 30: 19; *Doctrine* 1. 1 ff. [140 ff.]. Following this teaching, Symeon explicitly rejects any kind of ontological dualism and regards the idea of the equality, or equal competition, of God and evil as a 'blasphemy': *Eth*. 11. 578–80. This sharply distinguishes Symeon's ontology from Manichean, Messalian, and other dualist theories.

(129) *Hymn* 38. 37–40.

(130) *Hymn* 50. 150–2; cf. *Eth*. 1. 5. 79–83.

(131) *Hymn* 38. 66–9.

(132) *Eth*. 4. 799–801; *Hymn* 33. 18–20. On the concept of man as microcosm see Chapter 8 of our study.

(133) Cf. *Hymn* 45. 63. For the traditional background of the notion of man's 'glorious clothes' see Brock, *Perspectives*, p. iv, 98–104.

(134) *Hymn* 42. 189–92.

(135) See Chapter 2.

(136) See *Eth*. 3. 596–9; *Hymn* 34. 59–62. Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc*. 40. 36. 15–24 [280–2].

(137) *Eth*. 13. 236–40.

(138) *Hymn* 1. 143–6.

(139) Cf. Lossky, *Image*, 31–43.

(140) *Ep*. 5. 3 [162].

(141) Cf. *Myst. Theol* 1. 2–3 [142–3].

(142) *Myst. Th*. 1. 3[144].

(143) Lossky, *Image*, 43.

(144) Symeon joins two quotations from Gregory Nazianzen into one phrase; cf. *Disc*. 32. 15. 1 [116]: 'God is light, and light supreme'; *Disc*. 21. 1. 25–6 [112]: 'It is the limit of all that is desirable, and the repose of all contemplation'.

(145) *Cap*. 2. 17–18. Generally, we find an abundance of Areopagitic terms, unusual for Symeon, in his *Cap*. 2 (25 chapters in the middle of his 225 'Theological, Gnostic, and Practical Chapters'). The symbolism of darkness (as well as the Areopagitic language in general) is more common for Nikitas Stithatos: cf. his *Parad*. 5 5 [220]; *Chapt*. 1 1 [273]; 1. 42 [282–3]; 2. 50 [311]; 3. 39 [335]; 3. 53 [340]. Speaking of Symeon's *Cap*. 2, B. Fraigneau-Julien allows to the possibility of Nikitas' interference with the text of Symeon, while admitting that this is difficult to prove: *Sens*, 181.

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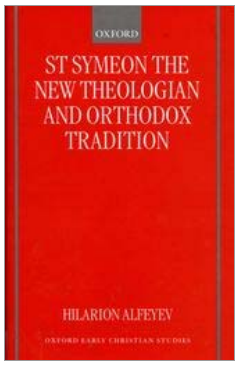

St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition
Hilarion Alfeyev

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The Patristic Basis of Symeon's Anthropology

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Source: TraditionHilarion Alfeyev
Author(s):

Hilarion Alfeyev

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Abstract and Keywords

Before surveying Symeon the New Theologian's doctrine of the nature and destiny of man in its relation to the traditional teaching, this chapter notes that the anthropology of the church Fathers has its roots in both the Bible and Greek philosophy. In particular, the patristic doctrines of the creation of man, of man's fall and redemption are totally based on biblical revelation. On the other hand, such concepts as that of man as microcosm, of the four elements of the human body, or of the three parts of the soul, are all borrowed from ancient Greek philosophy and medicine. Some features of patristic anthropology have joint roots, deriving from both sources: for example, the notion of the image and likeness of God in man. In Symeon's anthropology, we also find concepts deriving from Greek philosophy side by side with biblical ones. Those concepts of ancient philosophers that Symeon employed must have been borrowed by him either from earlier Fathers or from his educational background, but not directly from primary sources.

Keywords: Symeon the New Theologian, man, destiny, dual nature, anthropology, Bible, Greek philosophy, revelation, God

Before surveying Symeon's doctrine of the nature and destiny of man in its relation to the traditional teaching,[1] some preliminary remarks should be made. First of all, it should be noted that the anthropology of the church Fathers has its roots in both the Bible and Greek philosophy. In particular, the patristic doctrines of the creation of man, of man's fall and redemption are totally based on biblical revelation. On the other hand, such concepts as that of man as microcosm, of the four elements of the human body, or of the three parts of the soul, are borrowed from ancient Greek philosophy and medicine. Some features of patristic anthropology have joint roots, deriving from both sources: for example, the notion of the image and likeness of God in man.[2]

In Symeon's anthropology also, we find concepts deriving from Greek philosophy side by side with biblical ones. This by no means implies that Symeon was learned in philosophical literature. On the contrary, one thinks that his knowledge of it was very restricted, since nowhere does he refer to any ancient thinker or show any adherence to Greek philosophy.[3] Those concepts of ancient philosophers that **(p. 176)** Symeon employed must have been borrowed by him either from earlier Fathers or from his educational background, but not directly from primary sources.

1. The Dual Nature of Man

Symeon gives his most distinct and laconic anthropological definitions in his 'Chapters':

> God from the beginning created the two worlds, visible and invisible, and one king of the visible, who bears the characteristics of the both worlds in his visible and intelligible [natures]...Unique among all visible and intelligible things, man has been made twofold by God. He has a body formed of the four elements...and an intelligible, immaterial and incorporeal soul, which is united with them [the elements of the body] in an inexpressible and undetectable way, and is blended with them without mixture or confusion [*ἀμίκτως καὶ ἀσγχύτως*]. So this is man, a single animal, mortal and immortal, visible and invisible, sensible and intelligible, overseer [*ἐποπτικόν*] of the visible creation and knower [*γνωστικόν*] of the intelligible.[4]

In this passage, all the ideas and terms are traditional. The notion of man as king of the earth is a commonplace in the Fathers.[5] The concept of man as 'animal' derives from Greek philosophy and early patristic thought, where 'a rational animal' (*ζῷον λογικόν*) is a standard definition of man.[6] The notion of the body as consisting of four elements, is also a commonplace of both Greek philosophy and **(p. 177)** patristic literature.[7] The apophatic expression *ἀμίκτως καὶ ἀσυγχύτως* ('without mixture and confusion') reminds us of similar expressions used in the epoch of Christological arguments (fourth to sixth centuries) with reference to the union of the humanity and divinity in Christ.[8] The concept of man as an 'overseer' (*ἐπόπτης*), that is, judge or lord of visible creature, as well as the general idea of the duality of human nature, was developed, among other writers, by Gregory Nazianzenwho used the same expressions which we meet in Symeon:

> The Creator...wanting to produce a single animal [consisting] of both, I mean the invisible and visible natures, creates man...as an overseer [*ἐπόπτην*] of the visible creation and an initiator [*μύστην*] into the intelligible...a king of all on earth...who is earthly and heavenly, temporal and immortal, visible and intellectual...at the same time spirit and flesh.[9]

According to Gregory, man is a 'double being',[10] the one who consists of two different and opposite elements, body and soul,[11] or spirit and flesh.[12] By his soul man is an image of God, whereas by his body he is 'blended with the mud' of the visible earth.[13] Gregory's attitude to the body is dual: it is both friend and enemy, friend as a companion of the soul, enemy as an obstacle in ascetical struggle.[14] The soul, on the contrary, is highly estimated by Gregory: it has divine origin, being a breath of God,[15] a part of God,[16] 'a piece broken off the invisible deity'.[17]

The same anthropological dichotomism we encounter in many Fathers both before and after Gregory. Maximos the Confessor, in particular, spoke of man as a 'composite being' (*φύσις σύνθετος*),[18] **(p. 178)** who consists of body and soul.[19] Sometimes Maximos speaks of three elements of human nature: body (*σῶμα*), soul (*ψυχή*) and intellect (*νοῦς*);[20] or even of four elements: body, soul, spirit (*πνεύμα*), and intellect.[21] The triple division of the human nature, when the intellect is treated not as a part of the soul, but as an independent element, is less frequent in patristic tradition than the double one; however, it also occurs quite regularly in the Fathers.[22]

Symeon occasionally employs a threefold scheme of human nature, as in *Eth*. 15, where he interprets the 'three tabernacles' as a symbol of body, soul, and intellect,[23] or in *Cat*. 25, where he speaks of the changes that occur in the mind, soul, and body.[24] Much more systematically, however, Symeon speaks of the doubleness of man, perceiving the intellect as a part of the soul: 'I am not threefold, but twofold as a man; my soul is connected with the flesh in an unspeakable manner.'[25] This doubleness was revealed in the very act of the creation of man, whose body was made 'from the mud of the earth' but who received from God 'the breath of life, the intelligible soul' (Gen. 2: 7).[26]

As a twofold being, man stands between God and the created world, being higher than all other creatures because 'he alone among the creatures knows God'.[27] This idea is clearly expressed by Symeon in 'Hymn 53', where he speaks in

the person of God, so it is God Himself Who, interestingly enough, uses the anthropological vocabulary of Pythagoras and Philo:

> I call you a rational animal [*ζῷον λογικόν*],
> A double man [*ἄνθρωπος διπλοῦς*], made from two natures
> In an inexpressible manner...
> O paradoxical wonder! [You are] among...the creatures,
> Both immaterial and material:
> The material are the things that you see,
> And the immaterial are angels.
> Thus, among them are you
> The living man, the double one:
> Immaterial among the sensible [creatures],
> And sensible among the immaterial ones.[28]

(p. 179) Speaking in such terms, Symeon develops the traditional patristic concept of man as a mediator between God and the created world: this concept, which we encounter already in Philo,[29] might have been borrowed by him from Gregory Nazianzen[30] or Maximos.[31] Symeon also employs the notion of man as 'microcosm', or 'second world', directly referring to Gregory: 'Each of us is brought by God into this world as a certain second world, the great within this small and visible, as the Theologian testifies together with me.'[32] The notion of man as 'microcosm' derives from Greek philosophy[33] and is a commonplace in patristic anthropology. In Gregory, however, as later in Symeon, it has been deliberately reversed: man is not a small world within the great universe, but, on the contrary, 'the great within the small'.

As far as the relations between the body and soul within the human person are concerned, Symeon makes some interesting anthropological observations in *Cat.* 25, which is entitled 'On the changes of soul and body, some of which happen to us from air, some from the elements, and some from the demons'. Symeon says here that both the soul and the body constantly undergo many changes and movements, but the first willingly, whereas the second involuntarily:

> The soul is unchangeable by its nature and essence, and so is the mind...both of them being moved by free choice...The body, however, is by nature subject to change because it is composite...being a mixture or a compound of mutually opposite elements. Its essence is composed of hot, cold, dry, and moist, as those who are competent in these matters say, and this is true. As such the body has neither liberty nor will...[34]

It is not the body itself that desires sexual intercourse, eating, sleep, and other things that are commonly regarded as required by the body, Symeon suggests: it is the soul that seeks pleasure by **(p. 180)** means of the flesh.[35] The body does not even have any motion of its own, being driven by the soul, and none of the changes that take place in the body are the consequences of its own will. Illnesses, for example, are caused by a temporary imbalance among the elements of the body, 'when any of the four elements becomes excessive or deficient, that is, when one prevails over the others or is dominated or suppressed by them, and thus arise fluxes, mutilations or perhaps even the corruption of the whole organism.'[36] Symeon also describes how natural changes take place in the body by reason of illness, excess in food and drink, too cold or too hot weather, and so on.[37]

Some of these observations must have been taken from nature,[38] but generally Symeon in his anthropological ideas adheres to the teaching of preceding Fathers (and through them to the Greek philosophers). If we look at the writings of Nemesios of Emesa, Maximos the Confessor, and John of Damascus, we will find there all the anthropological notions expressed by Symeon in *Cat.* 25, namely that: 1. the soul is moved by free choice;[39] 2. the soul acts by means of the body;[40] 3. the body is changeable by nature;[41] 4. it does not have its own motion;[42] 5. it consists of the four elements;[43] 6. illnesses are caused by the imbalance of these elements.[44] It is, therefore, no mere chance that Symeon refers here to 'those who are competent in these matters'.

Symeon's concepts of the soul and of the intellect are also based upon the patristic anthropology. He adheres to the tripartite division of the soul: the latter is, according to him, 'an intelligible workshop, in the middle of which you should imagine the intelligence [*λογισ-τικόν*], as a heart, and inside the intelligence, the desire [*ἐπιθυμητικόν*] **(p.**

181) and the incensive power [*θυμικόν*]'.[45] The intelligence, Symeon says, discerns between good and evil and suggests to the desire what should be chosen, whereas the incensive power co-operates with both of them, 'like a good servant'.[46] Symeon also follows the traditional teaching on the single initial sense (*αἴσθησις*) of the soul, which is divided into five senses when acting in the body.[47]

With regard to the intellect (*νοῦς*), Symeon says that it is immaterial and bodiless,[48] is always in motion (*ἀεικίνητος*) and cannot remain inactive.[49] The intellect is the highest part of the soul: it is the intellect that is capable of ascent to heaven and contemplation of the divine mysteries.[50] Through the intellect (*κατὰ νοῦν*), man is able to know and see God.[51] As a mystical capacity of the soul, the intellect is called by Symeon 'the eye of the heart' or 'the eye of the soul'.[52]

2. Image and Likeness

The notion of the image and likeness of God in man was fundamental for the anthropology of the Greek Fathers.[53]

In the patristic tradition there were several interpretations of the image of God in man. For the majority of the Fathers, especially within the Alexandrian tradition, God's image in man was perceived in the human soul (*ψυχή*),[54] or, more specifically, in its highest part—the **(p. 182)** intellect (*νοῦς*).[55] Some authors perceived God's image in the freedom, or self-determination, of the human soul.[56] Many Fathers also made a distinction between God's 'image' and 'likeness' in man: the 'image' is what was given to man in the very moment of his creation, whereas the 'likeness' is what should be achieved by him as a result of his moral advance.[57] John of Damascus summarizes the patristic view as follows:

> ...God created man with His own hands, from visible and invisible natures, in His image and likeness; for the body He formed from the earth, whereas the intelligent soul He gave him through His own breath: this is what we call the divine image. For the expression 'in the image' refers to the intelligence (*τὸ νοερόν*) and the free will (*τὸ αὐτεξούσιον*), whereas 'in the likeness' means likeness in virtue, as far as this is possible for man.[58]

Alongside this basic conception, some authors perceived God's image in the dominant position of man in the universe,[59] as well as in his immortality[60] and creative ability.[61] One specifically Christian notion, which has no roots in the Hellenistic tradition, must also be pointed out—the understanding of the human person as an image of the divine Trinity. This was developed, in particular, in the work ascribed to Gregory of Nyssa, which perceives three aspects in this trinitarian interpretation of God's image: I. the first human family (Adam, Eve, and their son) is the image of the Father, the Spirit, and the Son; 2. the spiritual part of the human nature consists of the soul (*ψυχή*), reason (*λόγος*), and intellect (*νοῦς*), which correspond to the Hypostases of the Trinity; 3. the three powers of the soul (intelligence, desire, and incensive power) signify the Trinity.[62] For us, the second aspect is important as it will be reflected in Symeon: it is clear, **(p. 183)** the author of the work in question asserts, that our soul, its intellectual reason (*νοερὸς λόγος*), and the intellect (*νοῦς*) are the image of the Holy Trinity: the soul as unbegotten and having no cause of its existence is the type of the Father, the reason as begotten from the soul typifies the Son, whereas the intellect as proceeding from the soul is the image and likeness of the Holy Spirit.[63]

Symeon devoted to the discussion of the notion of God's image and likeness in man his 'Hymn 44', which is entitled 'What is meant by "in the image", and in what sense should man be considered as an image of the Prototype'. The theme of the hymn is the progression of the human person from 'image' to the perfect 'likeness' to God. Symeon begins with an outline of several possible interpretations of divine image in man, which are all based on the patristic tradition:

> In the image of the Word [*Λόγου*]
> We are given the reason [*λόγος*],
> For we are [created] rational [*λογικοί*] by the Word...
> Indeed, in the image [of God] is every man's soul,
> The rational image of the Word [*λογική εἰκὼν τοῦ Λόγου*]...[64]
> God the Word is from God—
> He is coeternal with the Father and the Spirit.
> In the same manner my soul is in His image,

> For it has intellect [*νοῦς*] and reason [*λόγος*],
> And it maintains them by nature
> Undivided [*ἄτμητα*], without confusion [*ἀσύγχυτα*]
> And consubstantial [*ὁμοούσια*]:
> The three are unified in one,
> But are distinguished.[65]

Just as the Father causes the Holy Spirit to proceed, so the soul causes the intellect to proceed, Symeon continues. Just as the intellect gives birth to the word (*λόγος*), so does the Father to the Son.[66] However, one will never understand this image (*εἰκών*) unless one first purifies one's own image from passions. When one is purified by one's good deeds, one becomes godlike and 'the perfect image of the Prototype'. Then the Holy Spirit is sent to man:

> He will illumine, enlighten and remake you, transforming what is corruptible into incorruptible, and will renew...the house of your soul...and will **(p. 184)** make your entire body incorruptible, and will make you god by grace, like to the Prototype.[67]

Thus, we find in Symeon's 'Hymn 44' several notions: 1. the reason is the image of God the Word; 2. the soul of every human person is the image of God; 3. the soul is the image of the Trinity; 4. the likeness of God is what must be achieved through virtuous life. In his other writings Symeon also develops the idea that the image of God in man consists of his dominant role in the universe.[68] All these notions are borrowed from preceding Fathers and reflect the traditional approach to the theme of God's image and likeness in man.

As is clear from 'Hymn 44', the final likeness of God in man is nothing else but deification, the climax of one's spiritual advance. Symeon returns to this idea many times, putting it into a Christological context. He emphasizes that every Christian must imitate Christ in order to become like Him.[69] Those who imitate Christ, he says, will finally become 'like Him, men by nature, gods by grace'.[70] Through the participation of His flesh in the Eucharist 'we become like Him...being counted worthy to see Him Who became like us, and being seen by Him as those who became like Him.'[71] The vision of God, the likeness to God and deification are, therefore, the same: 'Being Your sons by Your grace, we become like You—gods, who see God.'[72]

In such affirmations Symeon is again close to the traditional view of the Eastern Fathers. 'The likeness of God and the extreme limit of the desirable is to become god,' Basil the Great says.[73] According to Dionysios, 'deification is, as far as possible, likeness to God and unity with Him.'[74] The theme of deification is one of the central motifs in Symeon: we will return to it in a special section. Meanwhile, let us point out that for Symeon the likeness of God in man is realized in man's mystical union with God and deification. The fullness of God's image, which is given to humans as a pledge at the moment of creation, is also achieved in the final deification, when the entire man becomes 'the true icon of the Creator'.[75]

(p. 185) 3. The Destiny of Man

According to Maximos the Confessor, who reflects the characteristic ideas of earlier patristic tradition, man from his creation was predestined to 'become a god'.[76] In other words, deification was the goal of the creation of the human being:

> [God] made us so that we might become 'partakers of the divine nature' [2 Pet. 1: 4] and sharers of His eternity, and so that we might come to be like Him [cf. 1 John 3: 2] through deification by grace.[77]

To this glorious aim the first humans were to have ascended through the observance of God's commandment not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which was 'productive of death' (*θανάτον ποιητικόν*)[78] They, however, transgressed the commandment, being enticed by the Devil with the false hope of deification (cf. Gen. 3:5), and were dragged 'from natural stability into the realm of sensual pleasure'.[79] Since that moment, all generations have been 'under the tyranny of pleasure [*ἡδονή*], and so subject to justly deserved sufferings and...the death which they engender'.[80]

The Fall is, therefore, a turning point in the destiny of man. Among the consequences of the Fall there were not only sufferings and death, which affected humanity from outside; the Fall radically damaged the very nature of man,

including all its elements: the intellect, the soul, and the body. The intellect forgot the luminosity it possessed in its initial state;[81] its true dignity was obscured;[82] it lost its integrity and simplicity, having become to some extent divided against itself.[83] The soul lost its natural dominant position within human nature and became ruled by sensual pleasures.[84] The contamination of the **(p. 186)** intellect and soul meant the loss of the 'image and likeness of God'.[85] The body was also affected by the Fall, becoming subject to corruption.[86] The contrasting elements of human nature, initially intended to coexist in harmony, found themselves in a state of opposition to and war between each other: the body-flesh became an enemy of the soul and the intellect.[87]

Man in his fallen state is dominated by sin,[88] which is not part of human nature,[89] but is rather a deviation from man's natural state, illness of nature[90], and 'death of the soul'.[91] Both the body and the soul of fallen man are affected by passions (*πάθη*), which are, according to John Klimakos, also alien to man's true self;[92] however, in the opinion of some other Fathers, they are impulses originally placed in man by God, but in the fallen state distorted by sin.[93] For man after the Fall, the way to God inevitably presupposes struggle against sins and passions; by means of this struggle one hopes to regain the lost paradise.

The radical disintegration of human nature made it impossible for anyone to find the way to freedom from the tyranny of sin and passions, from the sufferings and death that affected the whole of humanity.[94] This is why God became fully man, with a nature constituted from body, soul, and intellect, but without sin, and deliberately accepted the consequences of sin—sufferings and death, in order to destroy death and liberate man from its tyranny.[95] Christ had to pass through all stages of human life in order to deify them: from Irenaeus onwards, the life of Christ is perceived as a 'recapitulation' of the original divine plan of man's salvation. For Adam's disobedience Christ pays with His obedience; the Devil's lie is destroyed by God's truth; human sin is rectified by the punishment of the Only-**(p. 187)** Begotten.[96] In order to redeem man fully, Christ pays for each of his debts separately.[97] Redemption, or salvation, is equivalent to deification, which was the aim of man's creation: in the person of Christ human nature is already deified,[98] and through Christ the hope of deification is newly open to everyone who believes in Him.[99]

These are the basic views of the church Fathers on human destiny. We can assert that the destiny of man is conditioned by the three key moments in his history: his creation after God's image and likeness, his fall, and his redemption through the Incarnation of God. How is this doctrine reflected in the writings of Symeon?

First, Symeon clearly indicates that, according to God's eternal plan of salvation for humankind, all people are intended for deification: the grace of the Holy Spirit seeks to enkindle human souls, 'so that they may draw near to the fire and one by one, or, if possible, all of them together, may be enkindled and shine like gods...'[100] Our ancestors, by virtue of their free will, were called to observe God's commandments, through which they were to be brought to the 'perfection of the image and likeness of God', drawing near God from generation to generation.[101] Adam and Eve, as well as all subsequent generations, were called to live an incorruptible and immortal life, ascending to their final transfiguration and deification, when the soul of each would become radiant and the body would be transformed into the immaterial and the spiritual.[102]

Our ancestors, however, were 'enticed by the hope of deification' which was offered to them by the Devil.[103] Following him, they 'went out of their nature and revolted against their Creator, pretending to become gods'; they rejected the natural way to deification through humble fulfilment of God's commandment and fell into pride and arrogance.[104] After the transgression, God invited Adam to **(p. 188)** repentance,[105] but neither Adam nor Eve repented, and so they were condemned to exile from paradise.[106] Our ancestors, being deprived of the blessing of paradise, bitterly lamented, for 'how could they not always and unceasingly weep, when remembering this gentle Master, that unutterable delight, the unspeakable beauty of those flowers [of paradise]...?'[107]

The Fall meant the loss of the integral knowledge of God: instead of divine and spiritual knowledge (*γνῶσις*) man received 'fleshly knowledge'; having become spiritually blind, he began to look passionately with his bodily eyes.[108] Man after the Fall found himself in the state of slavery to sin, which is a wall between God and man: those who are behind this wall are in darkness and do not know even themselves—who are they and where they go.[109] The first man, through the transgression of God's commandment, became 'deaf, blind, naked, senseless, mortal, corruptible, and unreasonable'.[110] All people after Adam are also sinners, transgressors, slaves of sin, accursed, dead, and dominated by evil.[111]

In many of his writings, when expounding the history of humankind, Symeon lays special stress on the Incarnation of God as a turning point in human destiny. It was only God Himself Who was able to save mankind from slavery to sin; this is why He was incarnate and became man:

> He wanted to restore man, whom He created with His own invisible hands in His image and likeness, not through someone else, but through Himself, so as to honour and glorify our [human] race by the fact that He became like us in all things and equal to us in our human destiny.[112]

In *Eth*. 1, 2, and 13, *Cat*. 5, 'Hymns' 44 and 53, Symeon speaks of the Incarnation in the context of the Pauline notion of Christ as the second Adam and of the Irenaean theory of Christ's life as 'recapitulation' **(p. 189)** of the life of Adam. God becomes man and comes to us to share our destiny; in order to deify the whole of human life, Christ has to pass through all the stages of it:

> He sanctified conception and birth and, as He grew up, little by little blessed every age...He became a slave and 'took on Himself the form of a slave' (Phil. 2: 7), and restored us slaves to the dignity of masters, having restored us as masters of [the Devil] who had been our tyrant...He destroyed altogether the curse of Adam. He died and by His own death He destroyed death. He has risen and annihilated the power and energy of the enemy, who had power over us through death and sin.[113]

Elsewhere Symeon says that God lived through all the stages of human destiny in order to 'restore and renew that first man [Adam], and through him all who were and are born from him'.[114] The verb *ἀναχωνεύω* ('restore', literally 'smelt anew') is used by Symeon to emphasize that the question is about the total transformation of the whole of human nature through the Incarnation of God. Not only all that has been damaged by the fall of Adam is restored by Christ; in Him human nature itself receives its new beginning, new creation, new birth. As the first man was earthly, Symeon says referring to 1 Cor. 15: 47–8, all his descendants were born as earthly; and as Christ is heavenly, all who are born from Him in the Holy Spirit are heavenly: since the parent is God, they are also gods by adoption and sons of the Most High (cf. Ps. 81/82: 6).[115] Thus, in Christ the whole of human history receives its completion and justification: the initial aim of man's creation, namely deification, is now reached in Christ Himself and in those who are born from Him.

It is quite clear that Symeon's view on the destiny of man thoroughly coincides with the traditional one, as it appears in Maximos the Confessor and other church Fathers. Following them, Symeon also develops the teaching on the *συνέργεια* ('co-operation') of God and man in the accomplishment of the salvation and deification of man.[116] Salvation is not obligatory, but is given to those who deliberately choose Christ as their Saviour and God, says Symeon in 'Hymn **(p. 190)** 43'. God never compels one to anything against one's will, but desires that people serve Him by their free will (*αὐτεξούσιον*) and free choice (*αὐτοπροαίρετον*). God is not king and guide of those who do not take up the cross and do not follow Him (cf. Matt. 16: 24), as they are children and slaves of the enemy.[117] Hence there arises the necessity for the observance of God's commandments, as well as for the struggle against passions and sins: these are the central themes of Symeon's asceticism.[118]

Notes:

(1) For a more comprehensive account of Symeon's anthropology, see Lascaris, *Liberation*, 47–118. For the general exposition of patristic anthropology see Wheeler Robinson, *Man*; Wallace-Hadrill, *Nature*; Jenkins, *Glory*. Cf. Wingren, *Man* (on the anthropology of Irenaeus). Cf. also Allchin (ed.), *Image*.

(2) Cf. Gen. 1: 26–7, and Plato, *Theaetetus* 176 ab (the concept of man as *ὁμοίωσις Θεοῦ*). For the biblical background see Lossky, *Image*, 127–35. For the Platonic background see Merki, *Ὁμοίωσις*, 1–7.

(3) Symeon's estimation of 'external wisdom' was generally sceptical; he uses the word 'Hellenic' in a pejorative sense, speaking out against 'philosophers and those who learn Hellenic books': cf. *Hymn* 21. 55–6. We should not forget, however, that all Byzantine schoolboys were provided with a certain Hellenic background, and so everyone who studied at school must have accumulated a certain amount of philosophical education. In particular, Aristotelian logic was studied, as well as Greek poetry and prose. In spite of this, the general attitude of Byzantines to Greek philosophy was negative: Platonic and Neo-Platonic ideas were regarded as especially dangerous for Orthodoxy and interest in them was limited to a very narrow circle of intellectuals: see Meyendorff, *Hesychasm*, p. viii, 54–5; idem,

Byz. Theol., 72–3; Browning, 'Enlightenment'. This negative attitude towards Greek philosophy was crystallized on a dogmatic level by the Council of 1082 (against John Italos), which produced a special anathema against 'those who study Hellenic sciences and do not take them as tools of instruction only, but follow their futile theories and accept them as true': see Gouillard, *Synodikon*, 56. In the history of Byzantine civilization a negative attitude towards Greek philosophy always coexisted with a positive one, but in monastic circles the former predominated: see Meyendorff, 'Trends', 53 ff. Symeon, therefore, followed monastic tradition when rejecting the validity of 'secular wisdom'.

(4) *Cap.* 2. 23.

(5) Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc.* 38. 11. 16 [126]: 'king of the earth'. Cf. also Makarios of Egypt, *Hom.* 26. 1. 8 [206]: 'man was the lord of the heaven and earth'. Cf. Symeon's *Hymn* 53. 120 ff.: 'I made him...the lord and master of all visible [creatures], having submitted all visible [creatures] as servants to him alone.'

(6) Cf. Pythagoras [*Fragm. Pre-Socr.* i. 99]; Sextus Empiricus, *Hypotyp.* 2. 26 [i. 70]. Cf. in the *AP. Const.* 7. 34. 6 [428]: 'The summit of creation is a rational animal'; Justin, *Fragm.* [1585 B]: 'What is man if not a rational animal, consisting of soul and body?'; Athanasios, *Defin.* [533 C]: 'Man is a rational animal, mortal, intelligent, and capable to knowledge'; Nemesios, *Nat. Man* 1 [11]; Symeon in *Hymn* 23. 69–71: 'Which animal do I mean? Indeed I speak of man, rational among dumb [animals]'.

(7) See note 43 below.

(8) Cf. *Symb. Chalc.*, *ACO* 2. 1. 2 [129]. Symeon's suggestion that the soul is blended and united with the body 'without mixture and confusion' reminds us of the following passage from Pseudo-Theodore of Edessa's *Theor.* [329]: 'The intelligent soul is conjoined with an animal-like body...Without change or confusion, and with each acting in accordance with its nature, they compose a single person, or hypostasis, with two complete natures.'

(9) *Disc.* 38. 11. 8–19 [124–6]. Cf. John of Damascus, *Exp.* 2. 12. 7 ff. [75 ff.].

(10) *Disc.* 40. 8. 1 [212]. Cf. Ellverson, *Nature*, 17 ff.

(11) *Disc.* 2. 17. 15 [112]; *Disc.* 2. 18. 12 [114]; *Disc.* 38. 11. 10–12 [124].

(12) *Disc.* 38. 11. 19–20 [126].

(13) *Disc.* 14. 6–7 [865 A].

(14) Ibid. [865 B].

(15) *Poes. dogm.* 8. 1 [446 A]; cf. *Disc.* 38. 11. 11–12 [124].

(16) *Disc.* 14. 7 [865 C].

(17) *Poes. dogm.* 8. 73 [452 A].

(18) *Ep.* 12 [488 D].

(19) *Myst.* 7 [684 C].

(20) *Myst.* 4 [678 B].

(21) *Myst.* 4 [678 BC].

(22) On dichotomism and trichotomism, see Nemesios, *Nat. Man* 1 [1].

(23) *Eth.* 15. 50–1.

(24) *Cat.* 25. 50–61.

(25) *Hymn* 13. 24–5.

(26) *Eth*. 13. 31–2. Cf. also *Cat*. 26. 140–5 ('twofold man must have twofold food').

(27) *Hymn* 23. 74–5.

(28) *Hymn* 53. 102–19. Cf. *Hymn* 23. 69–79 (the same concept is also expressed in God's person).

(29) *De virt*. 9 [v. 286 ff.].

(30) Cf. the passage from *Disc*. 38. 11 quoted above.

(31) See *Ambig*. 4 [1305 A]; cf. Thunberg, *Man*, 80 ff. Cf. also Clement of Alexandria, *Strom*. 2. 81 [155].

(32) *Eth*. 4, 799–801. Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc*. 38. 11. 13–14 [124–6]: 'God placed man upon the earth as a second world, the great within the small'. Cf. Origen, *Horn. Lev*. 5. 2 [336]; Gregory of Nyssa, *Man* [177 D]; Nemesios, *Nat. Man* 1 [15]; John of Damascus, *Exp*. 2. 12 [79].

(33) Cf. Democritus [*Fragm. Pre-Socr*. i. 153]; Aristotle, *Phys*. 252b; Philo, *De post. Cain*. 58 [ii. 13]; *Quis. rer. div. heres*. 155 [iii. 36].

(34) *Cat*. 25. 55–69.

(35) *Cat*. 25. 75–82.

(36) *Cat*. 25. 126–30.

(37) *Cat*. 25. 122–55.

(38) In particular, Symeon says that some people, namely those who have a 'warm complexion', are heated to excess and 'become weak and useless for any activity and motion' when the weather becomes too hot: *Cat*. 25. 138–44. Any European who has ever visited Istanbul (Constantinople) in the mid-summer, when the temperature is often above 40°C, would understand the whole truth of Symeon's observations.

(39) Maximos, *Soul* [357 D]; John of Damascus, *Exp*. 2. 12. 49–52 [77].

(40) John of Damascus, *Exp*. 2. 12. 46 [77].

(41) Nemesios, *Nat. Man* 1 [7]; John of Damascus, *Exp*. 2. 12. 86–90 [77].

(42) Cf. Maximos the Confessor, *Love* 3. 31 [81]: 'By nature all bodies lack a capacity of motion; they are given motion by the soul.' Cf. *Soul* [356 AB].

(43) Maximos the Confessor, *Love* 3. 30 [94]: 'Physical bodies...are made up of opposites, that is, of earth, air, fire, and water.' Cf. Nemesios, *Nat. Man* 1 [7]; 4 [44–5]; John of Damascus, *Exp*. 2. 12. 59–62 [78]. The teaching derives from the Pythagorean school: see *Fragm. Pre-Socr*. i. 449.

(44) Nemesios, *Nat. Man* 1 [9].

(45) *Eth*. 4. 392–4. Cf. Maximos the Confessor, *Love* 1. 79 [81]; 2. 12 [94] etc.; Nemesios of Emesa, *Nat. Man* 15 [72]; John of Damascus, *Exp*. 2. 12. 94–106 [79–80]. For the explanation of these three terms see *Philokalia* (English) 2. 380.

(46) *Eth*. 4. 403–11.

(47) *Eth*. 3. 152–71. Cf. Nemesios of Emesa, *Nat. Man* 6 [56]; John of Damascus, *Exp*. 2. 18. 1f. [83 ff.].

(48) *Eth*. 15. 98–9. Cf. Maximos the Confessor, *Quest. Thai*. 65, scholium 1 [307]: 'the intellect is formless'.

(49) *Cat*. 10. 94–5. Cf. Nemesios of Emesa, *Nat. Man* 2 [29].

(50) *Theol*. 1. 412–14 and *Eth*. 6. 252–5. Cf. Dionysios, *Div. Names* 7. 1 [194] (the capacity of the intellect to apprehend divine realities).

(51) *Hymn* 23. 74–8.

(52) Respectively, *Eth*. 1. 12. 420 and *Cap*. 1. 38. Cf. *Cat*. 33. 53–61 (interpretation of Luke 11: 34: 'the eye as the light for the body' means the intellect). Cf. Makarios of Egypt, *Hom*. 7. 8. 85–7 [76] ('the intellect...is the eye of the soul').

(53) This notion is based on Gen. 1: 26: 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.' Among the scholarly studies of this notion there are: Cairns, *Image*; Burghardt, *Image*; Wingren, *Man*, 14–26 (deals with Irenaeus); Sullivan, *Image* (deals mainly with Augustine).

(54) Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Poes. dogm*. 7, 4 [447 A]; Maximos the Confessor, *Theol. Chapt*. 1. 11 [1088 A]; *Myst*. 7 [684 D]. John Chrysostom emphasizes that the body is not God's image: *Hom. Gen*. 8. 3–4 [72 ff.].

(55) Cf. John of Damascus, *Exp*. 3. 18. 20–2 [157–8]: 'What is "after the image" if not the intellect?' Cf. Philo, *De opif. mundi* 69[I. 23].

(56) Maximos the Confessor, *Theol. Chapt*. 1. 11 [1088 A].

(57) Irenaeus, *Her*. 5. 6. 1 [77]; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom*. 2. 22 [186]; Origen, *Princ*. 3. 6. 1 [280]; Diadochos, *Chapt*. 89 [149–50]; Maximos the Confessor, *Love* 3. 25 [154]0

(58) *Exp*. 2. 12. 16–21 [76].

(59) John Chrysostom, *Hom. Gen*. 8, 3 [72]; Cyril of Alexandria, *Anthropomorph*. [1068 C-1072 A].

(60) Tatian, *Orat*. 7: man is created in 'the image of God's immortality'; cf. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech*. 4. 18 [477 B].

(61) Theodoret, *Quest. Genes*. 1. 20 [105 C]; Anastasios of Sinai, *Quest*. 89 [716 C-717 A]; Photios, *Amphiloch*. 253 [39–40].

(62) *Image* [1329 C-1340 C]; cf. Anastasios of Sinai, *Image* I. 1. 58–82 [9–11]. On the trinitarian interpretation of the image of God in patristic thought see Sullivan, *Image*, 165–95.

(63) Gregory of Nyssa, ibid. [1340 AC]; cf. Anastasios of Sinai, ibid, I. 3. 45–90 [19–21].

(64) Cf. *Hymn* 53. 107–9.

(65) *Hymn* 44. 30–50. Cf. *Theol*. 1. 218–39; *Theol*. 2. 63–130.

(66) *Hymn* 44. 74–92.

(67) *Hymn* 44. 93–165.

(68) Cf. *Hymn* 33. 18: 'The man, whom He created after His image and likeness...dominates over the earthly [creatures]...and over passions—this is what is meant by "in the image"'. Cf. *Euch*. 1. 1–13.

(69) *Cat*. 27. 324–6.

(70) *Eth*. 10. 730–3.

(71) *Eth*. 1. 3. 90–5.

(72) *Hymn* 15. 107–8.

(73) *Spirit* 9 [109 C]

(74) *Eccl. Hier.* 1. 3 [66].

(75) *Hymn* 44. 143–4.

(76) *Quest. Thal.* 22. 28–30 [137].

(77) *Myst.* 43 [640 BC].

(78) *Quest. Thal.* 43. 24 [293].

(79) *Var. Cent.* 1. 11 [1181 D–1184 A]. The 'Various Centuries' are not an authentic work of Maximos the Confessor but an anthology from his writings made by a later compiler: see *Philokalia* (English) 2. 49–50. Most of the chapters are taken from Maximos' *Quest. Thal.*; however, chapters 1. 1–1. 25 are not identified: see Disdier, 'Œuvre', 164.

(80) *Quest. Thal.* 61. 34–41 [87]. On patristic doctrine on fall and original sin see Williams, *Fall*, 167–314.

(81) Cf. Elijah the Presbyter, *Gnom. Anth.* 89 [297].

(82) Maximos the Confessor, *Quest. Thal.* 1. 13 [47].

(83) Gregory Nazianzen in *Poes. hist.* 45 [1358 A] distinguishes two intellects in the fallen man: one good and another evil (according to the variant reading: *ἔστιν ἐμοὶ διπλοῦς νόος*).

(84) Theodore of Edessa, *Chapt.* 7 [305]; Diadochos, *Chapt.* 78 [135].

(85) Makarios of Egypt, *Hom.* 12. 1. 2–5 [107–8].

(86) Diadochos, *Chapt.* 78 [135–6].

(87) Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Poes. hist.* 46 [1378 A–1381 A].

(88) Maximos the Confessor, *Quest. Thal.* 61. 80–1 [89].

(89) Maximos the Confessor, *Var. Cent.* 1. 11 [1181 D–1184 A].

(90) Cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *Hom. Rom.* [785 A].

(91) Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc.* 37. 23. 11 [316].

(92) *Ladder* 26 [1028 A]; cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 2. 13 [145]. As K. Ware shows, the sharply negative attitude to passions which is characteristic of many church Fathers has its roots in Stoics: 'Pathos', 317–18.

(93) Cf. Isaiah the Solitary, *Texts* 1 [30]. On this more positive understanding of passions see Ware, 'Pathos', 319–22.

(94) Maximos the Confessor, *Quest. Thal.* 61. 36–41 [85–7].

(95) Ibid. 61. 61–76 [87].

(96) Irenaeus of Lyon, *Her.* 5. 19. 1 [249–51]. The notion of Christ as New Adam derives from Paul (1 Cor. 15: 22, 47–9).

(97) Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc.* 2. 25 [122–4].

(98) Maximos the Confessor, *Quest. Thal.* 22. 28–49 [137–9]; cf. ibid. 40, scholium 2 [275].

(99) Cf. Maximos the Confessor, *Theol. Chapt.* 2. 25 [1136 BC].

(100) *Cat.* 34. 235–41.

(101) *Eth*. 10. 36–48.

(102) *Eth*. 1. 1. 53–63.

(103) *Eth*. 13. 60. Cf. the same idea in John of Damascus, *Varl.-Joas*. 7 [908 B]: the devil enticed Adam and Eve 'by the hope of deification'. Cf. Photios, *Amphiloch*. 72 [74].

(104) *Theol*. 1. 357–66. Cf. Philotheos of Sinai, *Chapt*. 14 [278]: 'Adam fell through pride.'

(105) Cf. *Cat*. 5. 175–9.

(106) *Cat*. 5. 216–70.

(107) *Cat*. 5. 286–9. The theme of Adam's lament is traditional for the liturgical worship of the Orthodox Church. Cf. the *Stichiron* of the vespers of the Sunday of Forgiveness: 'Adam was cast out of paradise...Seated before the gates he wept, lamenting with a pitiful voice and saying: "Woe is me, what have I suffered in my misery...O paradise...pray that once more I may take pleasure in thy flowers..."' [*Triodion*, 170].

(108) *Cat*. 15. 14–19.

(109) *Theol* 1. 257–61.

(110) *Eth*. 13. 64–6; cf. ibid., 89–97.

(111) *Cat*. 5. 406–13.

(112) *Eth*. 10. 67–72.

(113) *Cat*. 5. 415–32.

(114) *Eth*. 13. 86–9.

(115) *Hymn* 44. 256–70.

(116) The nucleus of this teaching is the idea that the interaction of God and human free will is necessary for deification. The saints, according to John of Damascus, are gods by divine grace, but it is by their own free choice (*προαίρεσις*) that they 'were united with God...and became by grace what He is by nature': *Exp*. 4. 15. 13–18[205].

(117) *Hymn* 43. 30–56.

(118) For a comprehensive account of Symeon's teaching on passions and the struggle against them, supplied with many patristic parallels, see Völker, *Praxis*, 129–32.

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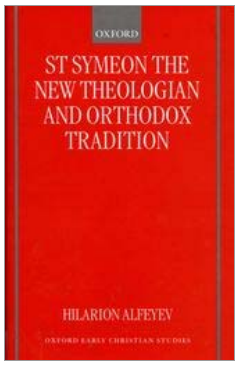

St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition
Hilarion Alfeyev

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The Patristic Background of Symeon's Ecclesiology

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Source: Orthodox TraditionHilarion Alfeyev
Author(s):

Hilarion Alfeyev

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Abstract and Keywords

Ecclesiology has become a fashion among theologians of recent times and very often the main task of modern investigations into patristic ecclesiology is to address contemporary issues with the help of the Fathers. In the patristic tradition, in fact, ecclesiology was never expounded as a comprehensive teaching on what the Orthodox Church is. Some ecclesiological questions, however, have been discussed in connection with temporary problems that arose within the Church from time to time. In the time of Symeon the New Theologian, there were also several ecclesiological problems at issue, which arose during the iconoclastic period and were focused around the question of the role of the hierarchy in the Church's life. Symeon devoted some of his writings, particularly his 'Epistles', to a discussion of these topics. Symeon indisputably regards the Church, both the earthly and heavenly, as the only place for salvation. This chapter examines Symeon's understanding of the Church, his attitude to the hierarchical principle in it, and his teaching on the sacraments.

Keywords: Symeon the New Theologian, Orthodox Church, salvation, hierarchy, sacraments, patristic ecclesiology, Epistles

'The quest for ecclesiological themes in the Fathers is an essentially modern concern', as R. Murray states.[1] Ecclesiology has become a fashion among theologians of recent times and very often the main task of modern investigations into patristic ecclesiology is to address contemporary issues with the help of the Fathers; this is not the task of the present study. In the patristic tradition, in fact, ecclesiology was never expounded as a comprehensive teaching on what the Church is. Some ecclesiological questions, however, have been discussed in connection with temporary problems which arose within the Church from time to time: the example of Cyprian, who expounded his ecclesiological views in the context of his polemic with the 'confessors' and Novatian, is one of many

In the time of Symeon, as it seems, there were also several ecclesiological problems at issue, which arose during the iconoclastic period and were focused around the question of the rôle of the hierarchy in the Church's life. Symeon devoted some of his writings, particularly his 'Epistles', to a discussion of these topics. In his ecclesiological ideas Symeon is generally close to the approach of the early Christian theologians, with some ideas which are engendered by his epoch and monastic background. In the present chapter some observations will be made concerning Symeon's understanding of the Church, his attitude to the hierarchical principle in it, and his teaching on the sacraments.

1. The Church and Salvation

It is well known that none of the Eastern Fathers ever produced a dogmatic definition of what the Church is; nor have the Ecumenical Councils done so.[2] However, some ecclesiological notions have been **(p. 192)** developed, which became universally accepted within the Church, and which, in the aggregate, constitute patristic ecclesiology as such.[3] One can summarize these notions in terms of the following patterns. Firstly, from the early Christian epoch it has been postulated, against all possible heresies and schisms, that *salus extra ecclesiam non est*, 'there is no salvation outside the Church': this is a commonplace throughout the whole of patristic theology.[4] Secondly, some qualities of the Church have been defined: it is 'one, holy, universal [*καθολική*], and apostolic', according to the Creed.[5] Thirdly, some images and metaphors have been applied to the Church, such as that of the body of Christ,[6] of the bride of Christ,[7] of the mother of the faithful,[8] of paradise, of Noah's Ark, of the Temple, of the vineyard, and others:[9] upon those images certain ecclesiological concepts have been based. Finally, the two-dimensional ecclesiological doctrine of the 'pilgrim Church' of this age and the 'heavenly Church' of the age to come has been affirmed.[10]

All these aspects of traditional ecclesiology are present in Symeon. He indisputably regards the Church, both the earthly and heavenly, as the only place for salvation:

(p. 193)

> Those who are separated from the divine body, the Church,
> And from the choirs of the elect—
> Where will they go, tell me, into what kingdom?
> In what place, explain to me, do they expect to live?
> For surely paradise, the bosom of Abraham
> And every other place of repose are [reserved] for those who are being saved.[11]

Next Symeon indicates what the qualities of the Church are. Its unity and holiness are shown by Symeon when claiming that it is 'the one body...spotless, faultless, without any blemish'.[12] The universal, cosmic character of the Church is particularly emphasized by Symeon when he speaks of the eschatological aspect of the Church: he calls it 'the beautiful universe' (*κόσμος ὡραῖος*),[13] 'the universe of God' (*κόσμος τοῦ Θεοῦ*),[14] 'the world from on high' (*κόσμος ὁ ἄνω*),[15] or 'the universe of the Church of the first-born, which is higher than [this] universe'.[16] The apostolicity of the Church is displayed in the passages in which Symeon speaks of the apostolic succession of the hierarchy.[17]

We find in Symeon a quite developed imagery of the Church, upon which he builds his ecclesiological concepts:

> In my opinion, the Church of Christ is an adorned universe (κόσμος ὡραϊσμένος) and complete humanity,[18] in which God is said to live...As we know, it is also called the body and the bride of Christ...As Christ is the head and God of the Church, so does He Himself become a temple for it, and likewise the Church, in turn, is built as His temple and the beautiful universe...The Church is the body of Christ and the bride of Christ, the universe from above and the temple of God; and all the saints constitute the members of this body.[19]

There is a set of the traditional ecclesiological images in the passage quoted; the notion of the Church as the body, however, predominates. This idea, which descends from St. Paul and is much developed in patristic tradition,[20] is central in Symeon's ecclesiology.

(p. 194) We remember (see Chapter 2) how Symeon in *Eth*.4 provided us with an allegorical explanation of 'the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ' (Eph. 4: 13), using the image of the body, in which each member

symbolized a certain virtue. The same image in *Eth*. I is applied to the Church:

> Since all the saints are members of Christ, God of all, they must be attached to His body and be connected with it so that He may be their head, and all the saints, from the beginning to the last day, may be His members, forming all together the one body of Christ.[21]

In this body, Symeon continues, the hands are those who accomplish the will of God; the shoulders—those who 'carry the burden of others' (Gal. 6: 2); the breast—who give spiritual food and drink to the thirsty and hungry (cf. Matt. 5: 6); the stomach—who are capable of containing God's unspeakable and hidden mysteries; the thighs—who bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit; the legs and feet—who show courage and patience in temptations.[22] Consisting of all these members, the body of Christ is 'balanced and complete'.[23]

Elsewhere Symeon returns to the image of the bride of Christ and develops it in the following way:

> Before the wedding, the bride receives only a pledge from her fiancé, hoping to receive the agreed dowry and the gifts promised in it after the marriage. In the same manner the bride [of Christ], who is the Church of the believers, as well as the soul of each one of us, at first receives only the pledge of the Spirit from Christ the Bridegroom, hoping to receive the everlasting gifts and the kingdom of heaven after she departs from here...[24]

The concept of the Church as the bride of Christ derives from Paul and is also quite traditional for the Fathers.[25] Symeon, however, places it in an eschatological perspective and uses it here to express his idea that the Church is somewhat unfinished at this present stage, waiting for its fulfilment at the final stage of the age to come. This is a reference to the teaching of the 'pilgrim Church', which we find already in Irenaeus: he speaks of the 'foreign land' of this world, in which the **(p. 195)** Church is built,[26] and of the realization of the Church's destiny in the future world, when it will be finally 'conformed to the image of the Son of God'.[27] According to Irenaeus, 'when the number of those predetermined by God is fulfilled, then all...will be risen'.[28]

Symeon stands close to Irenaeus in his understanding of the final fulfilment of the Church: he regards it as a gradual process effected through the acceptance of new members into it. There are many unbelievers who will believe in Christ, many sinners who will repent; all those who are predetermined to salvation and have not yet been born will be born and accepted by God before the final resurrection:

> Therefore, the completion and the fullness of the body of Christ will be achieved in those who are predetermined [*προωρισμένων*] by God to conform to the image of His Son; they are the sons of light and of day. Those who are still to be added to the body of Christ and to be attached to Him, are all predetermined, marked and numbered. Only when the body achieves fullness, and not a single member is lacking, will it be whole and perfect.[29]

As we see, in both Irenaeus and Symeon the concept of predetermination, or predestination, is clearly expressed. What does this concept entail in the context of Eastern theological thought, and in Symeon in particular? The New Testament 'key text' related to this concept is Romans 8: 29–30 (For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate...'). In both Paul and the Apostolic Fathers we find the idea that the Church is pre-elected[30°] and 'predetermined before ages' by the will of God,[31] and that 'the number of the predetermined' must be fulfilled before the final resurrection.[32] These ideas were developed by later theologians.[33] The idea that salvation depends upon God's will and mercy rather than on man's efforts, was constantly expressed.[34] At the same time patristic authors emphasized the importance of man's free will as a source of good and evil, and as such, as a means for either salvation or punishment.[35] John of **(p. 196)** Damascus gives a summary of the Eastern traditional approach to the problem. He distinguishes between God's 'providence' (*πρόνοια*) or 'foreknowledge' (*πρόγνωσις*) on the one hand, and 'predestination' or 'predetermination' (*προορισμός*) on the other, suggesting that 'God knows everything beforehand, but does not predestine everything; He knows beforehand the things which are within our power, but He does not predestine them.'[36]

In his explanation of Romans 8: 29–30, the verses which have caused so many arguments in Western tradition,[37] Symeon opposes the idea that some people are predestined to salvation and others not. Though such an idea is in general alien to Eastern theological thought, there must have been some kind of polemic concerning it in

Constantinople in the time of Symeon, either among theologians or, maybe, among ordinary people. Symeon himself provides evidence of this when he states that he hears 'many people' saying: 'What profit would there be for me to undertake many efforts and to show conversion and repentance if I am not foreknown, nor predetermined by God to salvation...?'[38] Symeon gives a comprehensive answer to this question, suggesting that, in fact, everybody is called by God to salvation through repentance:

> Why do you reason about the one who will destroy you instead of thinking about the one who saves you...? Do you not hear Him saying: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand' (Matt. 4: 7)...? Do you think He said or says to some: 'Do not repent, because I will not accept you', and to others, who are predestined: 'But you should repent, because I have known you beforehand'? Not at all! But every day He cries throughout the world and in every church: 'Come unto me, all that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' (Matt. 11: 28).[39]

It is true, Symeon continues, that God knows everything beforehand, both the past and the future. But, as the emperor who watches the competition of runners in the theatre is not a cause of their victory or defeat, which both depend upon their own efforts, so God is not a cause of man's destruction. God has given us free will, as well as the commandments which teach us; and though He always struggles together with us, the final victory depends upon our will and effort.[40] After an account of the whole of biblical history, Symeon **(p. 197)** concludes, appealing to his reader: 'Thus, you are also predetermined by God, my brother, and glorified, and justified, and called to eternal life through faith in Christ and Holy Baptism...So, acquire virtues and fulfil God's commandments...'[41]

This doctrine of universal predestination is a development of the traditional patristic teaching: John Chrysostom expressed similar views.[42] Salvation, according to both Chrysostom and Symeon, is only through Christ and His Church; everybody is called and predetermined to it, but it finally depends upon our free will whether to accept this call and follow Christ or not.

2. Hierarchy

Symeon touches on the question of the importance of the Church's hierarchy in *Ep.*3, which is devoted to the theme of the apostolic succession in the Church:

> Our Lord and God chose His Apostles and disciples, and entrusted to them all the mysteries of His economy [*οἰκονομία*]...When each of the Apostles was about to leave a certain place to go to another place, country, or town, they ordained in their stead bishops and priests, as well as teachers, spiritual fathers, and hegumens. When these, in their turn, were about to depart, they left [their places] to others, by choosing persons worthy of such service and ordaining them. Such an order and legislation transmitted through the action of the Holy Spirit has been preserved through succession up to our days...And since the flock of Christ increased and His people grew innumerable, the grace of the Holy Spirit appointed monks to help the bishops and the priests...[43]

The striking similarity between this passage and the Epistle to the Corinthians by Clement of Rome, was observed by B. Krivochéine.[44] It is certainly interesting that, in spite of the fact that during the eight centuries between Clement and Symeon, the doctrine of the Church's hierarchy had become much more developed, especially in **(p. 198)** the Areopagitic writings, Symeon prefers to rely on an apostolic Father of the late first century rather than on Dionysios.[45] He uses Clement's Epistle to confirm the idea of the apostolic succession in the Church. Only the last phrase of the passage quoted would indicate a certain difference between Clement and Symeon: the idea that monks were 'added' by the grace of the Holy Spirit to the Church's hierarchy must have its origin in the post-iconoclastic epoch, when the status of monks in Byzantine society was very high and their rôle in the life of the Church was sometimes even more important than the rôle of the hierarchy.[46]

Symeon's appreciation of the Church's hierarchy as an institution established by God involved the idea that 'there is no salvation without hierarchy'. The successors of the Apostles do the same things as the Apostles did, and they 'are equal to the Apostles and are themselves Apostles', Symeon claims.[47] Those who do not accept them reject Jesus Christ and God the Father.[48] In Symeon's words:

> No one comes to the faith in the Holy, consubstantial Trinity unless a master instructs him in the faith. No one can be baptized without a priest, nor can anyone partake of the divine mysteries by himself. And those

> who do not partake of these will never obtain eternal life.[49]

In these resolute statements Symeon has the whole of the patristic tradition behind him. Ignatios of Antioch constantly compares the bishop and presbyters with Christ and the Apostles: each member of the Church, according to him, should submit himself 'to the bishop, who occupies the place of God, to the presbyters, who occupy the places of the Apostles, and to the deacons, to whom the service of Jesus Christ is entrusted'.[50] Hippolytos of Rome suggests that the **(p. 199)** authority 'to bind and loose' given to the Apostles, is exercised by the bishops,[51] who partake of the same grace of the Holy Spirit.[52]

We see that Symeon had an extremely respectful attitude to the hierarchical principle in the Church. Yet he sharply criticized bishops, priests, and monks of his own time, declaring that some of them did not satisfy the requirements of their service.[53] Symeon also expressed the idea that the power of 'binding and loosing' belongs not to all priests, but only to those of them who 'enact the priesthood of the Gospel in a spirit of humility and who lead a blameless life'.[54] It is not enough to receive an 'ordination from men' (*ἐξ ἀνθρώπων χειροτονίαν*);[55] one should be appointed (*προχειρισθείς*) by God through the Holy Spirit, Symeon argues.[56] If one has not renounced and hated the world, has not lost one's own soul for Christ's sake, has not been counted worthy to contemplate the divine light and to receive the Holy Spirit, impassibility, and holiness, one should not become a priest.[57]

When reading such texts, one may have the impression that for Symeon the validity of a priest's ordination depends on the latter's personal qualities, and so, one might deduce, does the validity of the sacraments that he performs.[58] But Symeon does not go so far as to assert that the ordination or sacraments would be 'invalid' if the priest is not saintly, and that 'the water remains water' if an unworthy priest performs Baptism.[59] However, he comes quite near such an assertion, especially in one of his Epistles, where he says that the Bishops and priests who became 'fleshly, voluptuous, vainglorious, and inclined to heresies' are deprived of divine grace and the power to remit sins.[60] Speaking of the clergy of his time, Symeon argues:

> The power to remit is given by God not simply to those who are monks by their habit, nor to those who are ordained and numbered among priests, nor even to those who receive the dignity of the episcopate, that is patriarchs, **(p. 200)** metropolitans and bishops—far from it! They are only allowed to perform church service [*ἱερουργεῖν*]. And even this is allowed...only to those among priests, bishops and monks, who may be numbered among the disciples of Christ for their purity.[61]

How would these ideas correspond to the teaching of the Orthodox Church? It should be made clear, first, that Symeon, although mentioning the 'performance of church service', is primarily concerned here with the sacrament of confession in the context of the notion of spiritual direction as a charismatic gift: this is the central idea of his *Ep.* I and many other writings.[62] He does not so much question the validity of sacraments which are performed by unworthy priests as insist upon the necessity of being called by God to the office of spiritual fatherhood. In other words, the power of 'binding and loosing' is not given automatically to everyone who has been ordained priest; rather it should be acquired by means of moral purity and spiritual experience.[63]

Secondly, we should not forget that in Eastern tradition the view that the validity of the sacraments does not depend on the personal qualities of the priest has never been expressed as definitely as in the West (from Augustine's anti-Donatist polemics onwards). In fact, Symeon is not alone in his implication that there is a certain interdependence between the sacramental functions and personal qualities of a priest; we know at least one liturgical text of the Eastern Church which assumes a link between them, namely the prayer of the priest in the Liturgy of Basil the Great: 'May not my sins prevent the grace of the Holy Spirit from [descending upon] these Holy Gifts.'[64] This text does not clearly suggest that the sins of the priest do become an obstacle for validity of the sacrament; nevertheless, such a possibility is not excluded.

Thirdly, it is not by mere chance that in *Ep.* I Symeon mentions the clerics who are 'inclined to heresies' (*εἰς αἱρέσεις ἐξέκλιναν*). As we saw earlier, Symeon regarded some of his contemporaries as 'new heretics' and conducted a sharp polemic against them, in particular **(p. 201)** on triadological questions, as well as on questions concerning spiritual direction and sanctity. Is it not reasonable to assume that, when questioning the right of some bishops and priests of his time to perform sacraments, Symeon in fact had in mind the traditional view of heretical clergy as deprived of divine grace?[65] One may argue whether Symeon was quite correct when applying such rigid criteria to some of his

contemporaries, but even if he was not, his concern was certainly about the necessity to preserve the initial ideal of the priest as 'image of Christ' rather than about challenging certain traditional postulates.

Finally, it should be pointed out that, when insisting that the representatives of the clergy should satisfy the high requirements of their vocation, Symeon follows the teaching of earlier Fathers. Long before him Gregory Nazianzen argued that if one has not become superior to the passions and has not purified one's mind, one should not undertake the service of a priest.[66] According to Gregory,

> the priest must first...become light and then illumine others, draw near to God and then lead others near, be hallowed, and then hallow others...become god and deify others.[67]

John Chrysostom expressed similar ideas.[68] Both Gregory and Chrysostom had a very high view of the priesthood and complained about the poor moral condition of the clergy of their time. Symeon's main concern was the improvement of the spiritual condition of the Byzantine Church of his own epoch: and his ultimate requirements regarding the qualities of the hierarchy, together with criticism of it, must be understood in the context of this concern, as prophetic warnings rather than doctrinal formulations or canonical rulings.

(p. 202) 3. The Sacraments

Eastern tradition does not know the term 'sacrament' in the Western sense: the word *μνστήριον*, which is translated as both 'mystery' and 'sacrament', has much a wider meaning than the Latin *sacramentum*.[69] Neither does the patristic literature of the East know the teaching of a fixed number of sacraments.[70] To build up a comprehensive account of the 'sacramentology' of the church Fathers, and of Symeon in particular, would be even more unnatural than to present their ecclesiology as a systematic teaching.

For our purposes, however, we must analyse Symeon's views on the validity of Church's sacraments without attempting to shape these views into a system. Since his understanding of the Eucharist has already been discussed (see Chapter 3), we should now concentrate mainly on his teaching on Baptism and then, summarizing what has been observed, draw a conclusion concerning his attitude to the sacraments in general.

First of all, Symeon assigns a very important place to the sacrament of Baptism in the salvation of people. Baptism is the spiritual birth of a man, his liberation from the Devil:

> By Holy Baptism God regenerates and refashions us, completely sets us free from condemnation, and places us in this world wholly free and not oppressed by the tyranny of the enemy...We have been born again in Holy Baptism and have been released from slavery and become free, so that the enemy cannot take any action against us, unless we of our own will obey him.[71]

Baptism is a 'spiritual rebirth',[72] in which we become the sons of God,[73] brothers and members of Christ,[74] who are 'conformed to the glory of the image of God'.[75] Through Baptism one is adorned with the Holy Spirit and is given the guardian angel.[76] Symeon set a high value upon infant Baptism: small children baptised by the Holy **(p. 203)** Spirit are sanctified, protected, freed from the Devil, and become 'sheep of Christ's flock and chosen lambs'.[77]

At the same time Symeon emphasizes that 'perfect grace' is not automatically given to everybody in their Baptism: it must be acquired by good deeds.[78] Many people think that they possess the Holy Spirit 'unconsciously' from their Baptism, but in fact one must be aware about the gift one possesses:

> Again I appeal to those who claim that they have the Holy Spirit in an unconscious manner [*ἀγνώστως*] and think that they possess it by virtue of Holy Baptism...to those who admit that they have never had any feeling [*αἴσθησιν*] of the gift of God in contemplation and revelation and that they received it only by faith and thought, but not by experience [*πεῖρα*]...But St. Paul said: 'As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have been clothed in Christ' [Gal. 3: 27]...If those who have been baptized are clothed in Christ, what is that they are clothed in? God. Would the one who is clothed in God not know in his mind and understand what he is clothed in? The one who is bodily naked feels when he is being clothed and sees his clothes; how would he who is spiritually naked not know when he is being clothed in God ?[79]

Only the dead, Symeon insists, do not feel when they are being clothed; so those who are not aware of the Holy Spirit

they possess through Baptism are likewise dead.[80]

The majority of people who were baptized in childhood later on lost baptismal grace as they did not fulfil God's commandments, Symeon suggests.[81] We were clothed in Christ through Baptism, but we have been stripped of Him by evil deeds, 'for though we were sanctified without knowing it while we were yet infants in mind and age, yet we have defiled ourselves in our youth, not to mention the fact that we defile our souls and bodies every day by the transgression of His commandments.'[82] Consequently, repentance is needed,[83] by means of which man 'recovers that divine dignity which he has lost through his sinful life'.[84]

This leads Symeon to his concept of the 'second Baptism', which is **(p. 204)** the renewal of baptismal grace in those who have lost it. According to Symeon, it is not enough for salvation to be baptized 'in water': one should also be baptized 'in the Holy Spirit'. This Baptism in Spirit is first of all the Baptism of tears and repentance:

> [The one who repents] undergoes the judgement of the divine fire again and again, and, bathed by the water of tears that soak his whole body, he is little by little entirely baptized by the divine fire and the Holy Spirit, and becomes entirely pure, entirely spotless, a son of light and of day, and no longer the son of mortal man.[85]

The second Baptism also presupposes participation in the Eucharist and mystical experience.[86] This theme is developed particularly in *Eth*. 10, where Symeon argues that 'not all who have been baptised received Christ through Baptism':[87]

> Our salvation is not only in the water of Baptism, but also in the Holy Spirit; moreover, the remission of sins and participation in eternal life is given not only through the participation of the bread and wine, but also through the Godhead which mystically and without confusion accompanies them.[88]

This Godhead is revealed not to everybody, but only to those who are 'worthy of eternal life' and who are made 'sons of light' and 'sons of the day'; all the others do not see the light, but are in darkness.[89] These 'worthy' people are those who fulfil God's commandments and who sincerely repent.[90] To supply his concept with scriptural confirmation, Symeon refers to the episode described in Acts 8: 14–17, concerning the Samaritans who did not receive the Holy Spirit, 'but were only baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus'. Symeon states, on this basis, that 'not all who were baptized immediately received the Holy Spirit'.[91]

According to Symeon, the second Baptism is as important for salvation as the first one:

> As it is not possible for one to be saved who has not been baptized by water and Spirit, neither is it possible for him who has sinned after Baptism unless **(p. 205)** he is baptized from on high and born again...If someone does not even realize that he has been baptized...and wipes this Baptism away with thousands of sins, and if he denies the second Baptism...by what other means can he ever obtain salvation? By no means![92]

Elsewhere Symeon states that the second Baptism is perhaps even more important than the first one, which is only a type and symbol of it:

> In the first Baptism, water symbolizes tears and the oil of chrismation prefigures the inner anointing of the Spirit. But the second Baptism is no longer a type of the truth, but the truth itself.[93]

It is in this passage that J. Darrouzès detected 'doubtful orthodoxy'.[94] But if we look at the patristic tradition, we will find that all the concepts expressed by Symeon have parallels in the writings of preceding Orthodox Fathers. There is a striking parallel between the passage quoted and the words of John Klimakos:

> The fountain of tears after Baptism is greater than Baptism, even if it is somewhat bold to say so. For Baptism is just a washing away of evils which were in us before, whereas sins committed after Baptism are washed away by tears. As Baptism is received in infancy, we have all defiled it, but we cleanse it anew with tears.[95]

The idea of the 'second Baptism' runs through the whole of patristic theology. Clement of Alexandria spoke first about the Baptism of tears;[96] among other authors who developed the notion of the 'second Baptism', which is the 'Baptism of tears' or the 'Baptism of fire', there are Origen, Gregory Nazianzen, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa,

and Makarios of Egypt.[97] The following text by Anastasios of Sinai is very close to Symeon's teaching:

> As we are reborn through the water of Baptism, so we are purified when being rebaptized by tears of compunction. Moreover, neither Baptism nor the compunction of tears is given without the Holy Spirit. Do not wonder! **(p. 206)** Through our negligence we lost the grace that we received when being baptized in infancy...but we recover it through repentance and the flood of tears.[98]

It can be added that the view on the oil of chrismation as a symbol of the grace of the Holy Spirit is also common for the Fathers.[99]

What view should be taken concerning Symeon's insistence upon the necessity of being 'aware' of Baptism? We remember from the discussion of the Eucharist in Symeon (see Chapter 3) that he was not unique in his assertion that the sacraments are useless for those who reject them by their evil deeds: it was Gregory of Nyssa who said that 'the water remains water' for those in whom the grace of the Spirit is not manifested.[100] In the same manner Neilos of Ancyra claims that 'the one who comes to the Church of God with hypocrisy is baptized by mere water, and not by the Holy Spirit as well'[101]

Another parallel to Symeon's teaching on Baptism we find in the writings of Mark the Monk, who speaks, using the same terminology as Symeon, of the necessity of being consciously aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit: everyone who is baptized receives the grace of the Holy Spirit in a hidden and 'unclear' manner (*μυστικῶς, ἀφανῶς*), but the aim of the Christian life is to become, through the fulfilment of God's commandments, aware of this grace 'actively' or 'clearly' (*ἐνεργῶς, ἐναργῶς*)[102] to experience it 'in full assurance and perception' (*ἐν πάσῃ πληροφορίᾳ καί αἰσθήσει*)[103] According to Mark, the entire Christian life is the progressive 'revelation' (*ἀποκάλυψις*) of baptismal grace.[104] The mysteries we receive in Baptism are hidden in us until we begin to fulfil the commandments; only as a result of our co-operation with God do we 'receive experience [*πεῖρα*] of these things within ourselves, and we shall confess that Holy Baptism is indeed complete'.[105]

(p. 207) As in Symeon, in Mark the question is about fruitlessness of Baptism for people who are not aware of it rather than about invalidity or 'incompleteness' of the sacrament itself. 'To be aware' means for both Symeon and Mark to have an experience of divine grace, which comes through the observance of God's commandments.[106] This notion is perfectly in harmony with the traditional teaching of the Eastern Church, according to which there are some people who are baptised 'for condemnation', that is, those who later rejected Baptism and are condemned for this.[107] Baptism is insufficient without perseverance in Christian living: this is what both Symeon and Mark want to emphasize.

Summarizing Symeon's attitude to the Church's sacraments, one can say that he regarded them as an indispensable means for salvation. He emphasized that the reception of sacraments must be conscious, that is, one should be aware of the divine grace one receives and must live in accordance with it, observing God's commandments. Symeon also stressed the significance of the sacraments for the mystical life, the latter being impossible without conscious reception of them. Symeon perceived, as it were, two dimensions in sacraments, external and internal, while speaking more about the second one: each sacrament must be accompanied by the inner experience of its power and by a subsequent change to good. Without this the reception of the sacraments is useless, lacking in fruit, which consists of a gradual and total transfiguration of the human person, leading to deification.

Notes:

(1) *Symbols*, 239.

(2) See Florovsky, *Bible*, 57–8; Evdokimov, 'Currents', 26.

(3) It is noteworthy that all the fundamental ideas of Eastern ecclesiology were expressed by the great theologians of the second century, especially by Ignatios and Iraeneus. All the subsequent development of ecclesiological thought was based upon their ideas: see Durell, *Church*, 24–59, 202–54. Among modern general studies on patristic ecclesiology, the following ones are important: Bardy, *Théologie* (Clément- Irénée); idem, *Théologie* (Irénée-Nicée); Bouyer, *Église*, 213–627; idem, *Incarnation*; Delahaye, *Ecclesia*; Congar, *Église*; Herding, *Communio*; Mason, 'Conceptions'; Mersch, *Christ*; Plumpe, *Mater*; Zizioulas, *Being*.

(4) Cf. Origen, *Horn. Josh*. 3. 5 [306]; Cyprian, *Ep.* 73. 21 [794–5]; 4. 4 [475–6].

(5) *Symb. Nic-Cp. ACO* 2. 1. 2 [80]; Hahn, *Bibliothek*, 30.

(6) See Bouyer, *Église*, 333–71; Mersch, *Corps*; Wingren, *Man*, 159–70.

(7) Bouyer, *Église*, 601–54.

(8) See Delahaye, *Ecclesia*, 33–128; Bouyer, *Église*, 655–70.

(9) An excellent book by R. Murray, *Symbols*, deals with the traditional imagery of the Church. The study concerns mainly Aphrahat and Ephrem the Syrian, but the patristic tradition in general is also implied. See also Brunet, 'Figures' in *DSp* 4. 384–401; Lampe, *PGL*, 430–2.

(10) See Murray, *Symbols*, 239–76. The expression 'pilgrim Church' is of Western origin; Augustine calls the Church 'a pilgrim in a foreign land': *City* 18. 51 [650]. At the same time, this expression corresponds to Hebrews 13:14 ('Here we have no abiding city'; cf. also Heb. 11: 13; 1 Pet. 2: 11) and to the general ecclesiological approach of the Eastern Fathers: cf. *Diogn*. 5. 2 [62]. Cf. also Irenaeus, *Her*. 4. 21. 3 [683]: the Church is built on the foreign land of this world. The concept of *ξενιτεία* ('pilgrimage': see the discussion in Chapter 4) may be regarded as a particular monastic development of the early Christian notion of a pilgrim Church.

(11) *Hymn* 42. 157–63.

(12) *Hymn* 42. 146.

(13) *Eth*. 1. 7. 24.

(14) *Eth*. 1. 7. 37.

(15) *Eth*. 1. 8. 1–2.

(16) *Eth*. 1. 8. 13. Cf. the comparison between the universe and the Church in Maximos the Confessor, *Myst*. 2 [668 C–669 D].

(17) See below, in the section on the church hierarchy.

(18) Cf. the comparison between the Church and man in Maximos the Confessor, *Myst*. 4 [672 B] and 7 [681 C–684 A]; cf. Thunberg, *Man*, 122–3.

(19) *Eth*. 1. 7. 3–8. 3.

(20) St. Paul speaks of Christ as head and the Christians as members of the Church's body: Eph. 1: 23; cf. 1 Cor. 12: 12. See also Ignatios of Antioch, *Ep. to the Smyrnians* 1. 2 [132–4]; Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc*. 32. 10 [106]; John Chrysostom, *Horn. 1 Cor*. 30. 1 [365]. Cf. Durell, *Church*, 12, 132, 144, 207; Murray, *Symbols*, 69–94.

(21) *Eth*. 1. 6. 1–6.

(22) *Eth*. 1. 6.6–30.

(23) *Eth*. 1.6. 31–3.

(24) *Cap*. 3. 50.

(25) Cf. Eph. 5: 24–32. Cf. Methodios of Patara, *Symp*. 3. 8 [35–6]; Gregory of Nyssa, *Song* 11 [318]; Anastasios of Sinai, *Hexaem*. 12 [1064 A–1065 A]. Cf. Murray, *Symbols*, 131–42.

(26) *Her*. 4. 21. 3. 52–4 [683].

(27) *Her*. 4. 37. 7. 173–4 [943]; cf. Durell, *Church*, 207.

(28) *Her*. 2. 33. 5. 8–10 [353].

(29) *Eth*. 1. 8. 15–23.

(30) Clement of Rome, *Cor*. 29 [148].

(31) Ignatios of Antioch, *Ep. to the Ephesians*, inscr. [56].

(32) Justin, *1 Apol*. 45. 1 [158].

(33) See Simonin, 'Predestination' in *DTC 6*. 2819–31.

(34) Cf. Origen, *Princ*. 3. 1. 18 [230–1]; Athanasios of Alexandria, *Incarn*. 5. 1 [278].

(35) Cf. Methodios of Patara, *Symp*. 8. 13 [98] (the free will as a source of good); Irenaeus of Lyon, *Her*. 4. 39. 3 [968–70] (as a source of evil).

(36) *Exp*. 2. 30 [103].

(37) Cf. Garrigou-Lagrange and others, 'Predestination' in *DTC 6*. 2832–3022.

(38) *Eth*. 2. 1. 1–7.

(39) *Eth*. 2. 1.9–23.

(40) *Eth*. *2. 1*. 84–105.

(41) *Eth*. 2. 7. 269–77.

(42) Cf. *Horn*. *Rom*. *16* [254], where, interpreting Rom. 8: 29–30, Chrysostom advances the idea of the universal call: 'If the call alone would be sufficient, why have not all been saved? Because…not only the call [from God] but also the will (*πρόθεσις*) of those who are called are the reason of their salvation. The call is not compulsion or constraint. All have been called, but not all followed the call.'

(43) *Ep*. 3 [*Vatic, gr*. 1782, fol. 210, line 9—fol. 2 iov., line 5].

(44) See *Light*, 334–5. Cf. Clement of Rome, *Corinth*. 42–4 [168–72]. On the apostolic succession of the hierarchy in general see Bouyer, *Eglise*, 401–47.

(45) Generally, the Dionysian idea of the hierarchical structure of the universe seems to be alien to Symeon: we do not find in his writings any reference or parallel to it: cf. Stathopoulos, *Gottesliebe*, 20.

(46) Dionysios the Areopagite included monks in the lowest hierarchical triad of 'those who are initiated', side by side with the catechumens and lay people ('saints'), though higher than the latter: see *Eccl*. *Hier*. *6*. 3 [116]. Symeon's view is different: he links monks to the hierarchy and clergy rather than to the laity.

(47) *Ep*. 3 [*Vatic, gr*. 1782, fol. 217V., lines 12–13].

(48) Ibid. [fol. 217V., lines 20–3].

(49) Ibid. [fol. 217V., lines 12–16]. In the light of the texts quoted one may find the suggestions of some modern scholars concerning Symeon's alleged 'neglect' of the hierarchy rather ungrounded: see Kazhdan, 'Symeon' [*ODByz* 3, 1987] ('Symeon neglects the concept of hierarchy'); Kazhdan and Constable, *People*, 91 ('in Symeon's works there is no place' for ecclesiastical hierarchy); cf. also Garsoian, 'Heresy', 108 ('Symeon's rejection of hierarchical jurisdiction…').

(50) Ignatios of Antioch, *Ep. to the Magn*. 6. 1 [84]. Cf. *Trail*. 3.1 [96]; *Smyrn*. 8.1 [138].

(51) *Apost. Trad*. 3 [46].

(52) *Her., prooimion* [3].

(53) See, for example, *Hymn* 58 and *Ep*. 3. Cf. also Krivochéine, *Light*, 127 ff.

(54) *Cat*. 28. 263–5.

(55) *Cat*. 28. 292–3.

(56) *Eth*. 6. 428.

(57) *Hymn* 58. 224–8.

(58) Cf. Darrouzès, *SC* 122. 33. K. Ware points to the closeness of such a point of view to Donatism: 'Father', 308.

(59) Cf. Darrouzès, *SC* 122. 33. Exactly such a point of view is expressed in the *L. Andrew* [800 B], according to which when an unworthy priest celebrates the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit does not come down upon the holy gifts, and those who attend such liturgies are deprived of the presence of the Spirit. This extreme suggestion seems to be rather exceptional for Byzantine ecclesiastical literature.

(60) *Ep*. 1. 13 [123].

(61) Ibid. [124].

(62) This notion derives from Symeon's personal experience with his spiritual father Symeon the Studite (cf. the discussions in Chapters 1 and 4). On the understanding of spiritual fatherhood as a charismatic vocation, traditional in Eastern monasticism, see Bunge, *Vaterschaft*, 37–78.

(63) Incidentally, in the Greek Orthodox Church even up to the present time not all priests are allowed to hear confessions, but only those who, upon reaching a certain age, receive the blessing of a bishop to become spiritual fathers.

(64) *Hieratikon*, 201.

(65) This view is expressed, among many other writers, by Cyprian, *Ep*. 69. 5 [753–4]; *Ep*. 72. 2 [776–7].

(66) *Disc*. 2. 91 [208].

(67) *Disc*. 2. 71. 9–73. 18 [184–6]; cf. *Disc*. 2. 95. 8–27. In the writings of Gregory we find a sharp criticism of the bishops and priests of his time, which reminds us of Symeon's criticism of his contemporaries: cf. Gregory's *Poes. moral*. 5 [642]; 13 [1229 ff.]; 17 [1262 A–1269 A].

(68) See *Priesthood* 6. 4 [317–20]. J. van Rossum has made some interesting observations concerning the correspondence between Clement of Alexandria's concept of the true gnostic and Symeon's understanding of priesthood: see *Problem*, 36–8. Clement, in particular, writes: 'Those who have exercised themselves perfectly and gnostically, according to the Gospels, may be enrolled in the chosen body of the Apostles. Such a one is in reality a presbyter of the Church, and a true minister of the will of God...not as being ordained by men, nor regarded righteous because he is a presbyter, but being enrolled in the presbyterate because he is righteous'; *Strom*. 6. 13 [504]. The idea that 'ordination from men' is not sufficient for being a true presbyter is clearly expressed here.

(69) See Lampe, PGL, 891. Symeon, in particular, speaks of the 'dread mystery' of divine illumination (*Hymn* 1. 1), of the 'paradoxical mystery' of one's withdrawal from the world (*Hymn* 9. 9), of the 'new mystery' of the vision of light (*Hymn* 22. 1), of the 'wealth of the mysteries' of contemplation (*Hymn* 29. 248) etc.

(70) Cf. Kelly, *Doctrines*, 423. The teaching on seven sacraments infiltrated into the Eastern Church as a result of

Western influence after the late sixteenth century: cf. Meyendorff, *Byz. Theol.*, 191–2.

(71) *Cat.* 5. 384–7; 445–8.

(72) *Eth.* 9. 146–7.

(73) *Eth.* 10. 432.

(74) *Cat.* 9. 157–60.

(75) *Eth.* 2. 7. 291–3.

(76) *Euch.* 2. 17–19.

(77) *Ep.* 4 [Vatic, gr. 1782, fol. 222, lines 8–11]. It is again quite surprising to read in N. Garsoian's article, devoted to the 'links' between Byzantine heretics and Symeon, the assertions that Symeon's doctrine on Baptism 'brings in mind Neo-Paulician rejection of orthodox baptism' and that it 'tacitly denies the validity of child baptism, explicitly repudiated by the Bogomils and Paulicians': 'Heresy', 109.

(78) *Cap.* 3. 45.

(79) *Eth.* 5. 1–65.

(80) *Eth.* 5. 68–74.

(81) *Eth.* 13. 193–7; 236–41.

(82) *Cat.* 2. 139–44.

(83) *Cat.* 2. 144–5.

(84) *Cat.* 30. 138–40.

(85) *Eth.* 10. 114–18.

(86) Cf. Krivochéine, *Light*, 147–8.

(87) *Eth.* 19, title.

(88) *Eth.* 10. 188–92.

(89) *Eth.* 10. 188–97.

(90) cf. *Eth.* 10. 211–34.

(91) *Eth.* 10. 328–38. This controversial text was discussed by John Chrysostom, who gave a rather pragmatic interpretation of it, asserting that the Samaritans 'received the Spirit of remission [of sins], but did not receive the Spirit of miracles'; he also suggested two possible reasons why the Holy Spirit was not given to the Samaritans: either Philip, who baptized them, did not give Him to them 'honouring the Apostles', or he had not the authority to give the Spirit because such an authority was restricted to the twelve Apostles, whereas Philip was one of the seven deacons: *Horn. Acts* 18. 2–3 [143–4].

(92) *Cat.* 32. 59–72.

(93) *Cap.* 1. 36.

(94) *SC* 51. 36.

(95) *Ladder* 7 [804 AB].

(96) 'Being baptized anew (*ἑκ δτνέρου* for the second time) by tears': *Rich* 42 [190].

(97) Origen speaks of the 'Baptism of fire' as an act of the Holy Spirit signifying a Christian's entry into a more perfect life: *Comm. John* 6. 32–3 [141–3]. Gregory Nazianzen speaks of the five Baptisms, including one 'of tears': *Disc.* 39. 17 [186–8]. Basil speaks of the Baptism of fire by virtue of illumination by the teaching of Christ: *Bapt.* 1.2. 10 [132–4]. Gregory of Nyssa says that 'to some I guarantee health through water and bathing (*λουτρόν*), but for others I wipe out the disease through tears': *Bapt.* [417 B]. Cf. the teaching of the 'Baptism of fire and Spirit' in Makarios of Egypt, *Horn.* 26. 23 [216] and *Horn.* 47. 1 [304].

(98) *Or. Ps.* [1129C].

(99) Cf. *Ap. Const.* 3. 16. 4 [Funk 7]: 'You anoint the head of the baptized...by the holy oil in type of spiritual Baptism'; also Cyril of Jerusalem, *Myst.* 3. 6 [128]. Cf. Lampe, *Seal*, 216 ff. Developing this traditional imagery, Symeon goes further, stressing mystical side of inner anointing by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

(100) *Or. Cat.* 40 [160–1].

(101) *Letters* 2. 223 [316 D] and 3. 8 [369 C].

(102) *Deeds* 55–6 [937 CD]; *Bapt.* [988 C]. For the full discussion of the subject see Ware, 'Baptism'.

(103) *Consult.* 4 [1108 D]. Cf. Makarios of Egypt, *Horn.* 37. 83 [267].

(104) *Bapt.* [1028 BC]. Cf. Ware, 'Baptism', 441–2.

(105) *Bapt.* [993 C]. Cf. Ware, 'Baptism', 446. For the comparison between Symeon's understanding of Baptism and that of Makarios of Egypt see Hatzopoulos, *Two Outstanding Cases*, 133 ff.

(106) Cf. Symeon, *Eth.* 10. 211 ff.

(107) Cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *Com. Is.* 5. 6 [1444 B].

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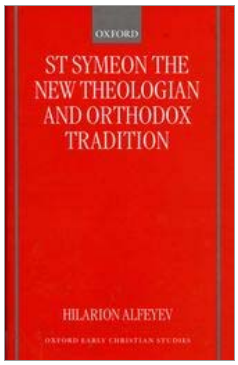

St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition
Hilarion Alfeyev

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Some Aspects of Symeon's Asceticism and Mysticism with Patristic Parallels

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Source: New Theologian and Orthodox TraditionHilarion Alfeyev
Author(s):

Hilarion Alfeyev

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Abstract and Keywords

It would be difficult to draw a boundary line between Symeon the New Theologian's asceticism and his mysticism, since he constantly develops ascetical themes in their mystical aspect, as well as mystical ones with reference to ascetical practice. Symeon's ascetical approach is purely monastic and as such is very much indebted to the preceding tradition of Eastern monasticism. This chapter examines some of the most characteristic features of Symeon's asceticism and mysticism with respect to their interrelation and connection with patristic tradition. It discusses tears and repentance as well as the features that represent the most characteristic constituents of Symeon's doctrine and spirituality. The discussion of the theme of tears in Symeon brings up one of the most important features of his mysticism and theology: his teaching on the vision of God. Symeon's views on divine light, ecstasy, dispassion, and deification are also considered.

Keywords: Symeon the New Theologian, asceticism, mysticism, tears, repentance, God, divine light, ecstasy, dispassion, deification

It would be difficult to draw a boundary line between Symeon's asceticism and his mysticism, since he constantly develops ascetical themes in their mystical aspect, as well as mystical ones with reference to ascetical practice. The ascetical approach of Symeon is purely monastic and as such is very much indebted to the preceding tradition of Eastern monasticism. Some important items of resemblance between Symeon as an ascetical writer and the Studite tradition, of which both he and his spiritual father were representatives, have already been pointed out (see Chapter 4). In this section some of the most characteristic features of Symeon's asceticism and mysticism will be examined in their interrelation and connection with patristic tradition. The theme of tears and repentance will be the only ascetical theme to be discussed here.1 The next features to be analysed are all related to Symeon's mysticism and

represent the most characteristic constituents of his doctrine and spirituality.

(p. 209) 1. Tears and Repentance

In the course of this study the theme of tears in Symeon was touched several times: when discussing his interpretation of Matt. 5:4 ('Blessed are those who mourn'), when examining his eucharistic approach, when speaking of the influence of Symeon the Studite upon him, and when analysing his concept of 'second Baptism'. On the basis of these earlier observations, it can be suggested that Symeon's teaching on tears has a certain traditional background, namely 1. it is founded on scriptural texts; 2. it corresponds to the ideas of Symeon the Studite and the ascetical practice of Studite monasticism; 3. it is connected in Symeon's thought with the Church's sacraments, particularly Baptism and the Eucharist. Let us now make an attempt to summarize Symeon's ideas concerning tears and repentance, and outline their prehistory in patristic tradition.[2]

First of all, Symeon understands repentance as a constant state of man: he speaks of 'unremitting' (*ἀδιάλειπτος*) penitence and compunction,[3] of 'perpetual' (*ἀεί*) repentance,[4] of weeping 'every day and night',[5] of repentance 'always and continuously' (*ἀεὶ καὶ διηνεκῶς*).[6] It is not enough to repent once, Symeon says: one should weep 'daily and without ceasing till death'.[7] Constant weeping is as necessary for salvation as being a member of the Church, being baptised and receiving Communion: 'Without repentance, sincere repentance such as the Word requires from us, it is impossible to be saved,' he asserts.[8]

Repentance is not a specially monastic task, Symeon says, referring to John Chrysostom's explanation of Psalm 50/51:[9] it is possible for the one who has wife and children, servants and large household, who is wealthy and involved in worldly affairs, 'to weep daily [*καθ'ἑκάστην*] and pray and repent, and even attain to perfection of virtue...receive the Holy Spirit, become a friend of God and enjoy the **(p. 210)** vision of Him'.[10] If repentance were possible for some people and impossible for others, Gregory the Theologian would not say: 'Let all offer tears, let all offer purification, let all offer their ascent and their straining forward to that which lies ahead.'[11]

As we see, Symeon himself is quite aware of patristic parallels to his teaching and mentions Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom among his sources. He also refers to John Klimakos' teaching on repentance (see below). Symeon's concept of tears seems to be particularly close to that of Isaac the Syrian, who also speaks of 'continual' and 'unceasing' mourning 'night and day',[12] and in general assigns a very important part to tears in his ascetical doctrine: as we shall see shortly, there are some obvious parallels between the two authors.[13] Isaac's predecessor, Ephrem the Syrian, was also known as 'teacher of compunction'; his unceasing tears became a legend: 'When I start to remember his floods of tears', the author of his encomium writes, 'I myself begin to weep, for it is almost impossible to pass dry-eyed through the ocean of his tears. There was never a day or night, or part of a day or night, or any moment, however short, when his vigilant eyes did not appear bathed in tears.'[14] The motif of 'day-and-night' mourning, therefore, has had a long history in the Fathers before Symeon.

The writings by Symeon contain some practical recommendations concerning the 'methods' of repentance, which are applicable mostly to monks. Of a particular interest is the one given in *Cat*. 30, where Symeon suggests how to obtain tears and true repentance:

> Stand up to pray as one condemned. Say first of all *Trisagion*, then 'Our Father'. When you come to say 'Lord, have mercy' and wish to stretch up your hands to the height of heaven, look at them and, remembering your evil **(p. 211)** deeds and how many sins you have committed with them, say within yourself: 'Woe to me, unclean and defiled! May it not be that when God sees me stretching out my hands He will remember my sins and send fire on me to consume me.' Then turn your hands behind your back and join them, and cry from the depth of your soul with a pitiful voice: 'Have mercy on me, a sinner' and other words. Then beat your face, pluck at your hair and pull it, saying: 'Why did you commit such and such a sin?' After you have beaten yourself enough, stand up again with joyful soul, recite two or three psalms and make some prostrations. And God may grant that tears and compunction come on you.[15]

As Symeon himself indicates, this method of repentance is based on 'the discourse "On Penitence" by our divine Father John Klimakos'.[16] In the 'Ladder' we find an impressive description of the 'prison', a place where fallen monks deliberately put themselves:

> Some of them lifted up their eyes to heaven and with wailings and cries implored help from there, others stood in prayer with their hands behind their backs, like criminals...Some sat on the ground in ashes, hiding their faces between their knees...others were continuously beating their breasts and recalling their past life...Some of them watered the ground with their tears, others, incapable of tears, struck themselves...Some loudly lamented over their souls...others sat...swaying their heads unceasingly, and roaring and moaning like lions from their hearts and teeth.[17]

Comparing this description with Symeon's 'method', we find similar elements, such as having the hands behind the back, beating oneself, remembering one's sinful life: these elements either accompanied repentance, as in case of Klimakos' 'prison', or must have provoked it, as in Symeon. There are, at the same time, certain differences: Symeon does not refer only to 'fallen' monks, but gives universally applicable advice; his prescriptions are in general more moderate. What is important for us, that Symeon, when advancing his method of repentance, had John Klimakos' description of monastic practice of the seventh century as a source of inspiration; one might think that Symeon himself followed this method.

As we see, in both Klimakos and Symeon repentance is described as a rather painful phenomenon.[18] At the same time both authors perceive another dimension of it: they speak of the spiritual joy **(p. 212)** which is a fruit of tears and which accompanies them. The seventh chapter of the 'Ladder' is wholly devoted to 'joy-making mourning', where Klimakos expresses his amazement at 'how mourning and so-called grief contain joy and gladness interwoven within them like honey in the comb'.[19] Symeon, in his turn, constantly speaks of the 'sweetness of tears', which is experienced by the one who repents.[20] The first tears, those of the beginners, are 'bitter and sad', but God changes the bitterness of tears into sweetness. In *Cat*. 23 Symeon describes the spiritual condition of the one who has reached this final stage of repentance:

> The compassionate God will speedily hear him and will hasten to grant him relief from his pain and deliverance from the distress of his heart...He will pour on him His goodness and change his sorrow into joy, and He will change the bitterness of his heart into the sweetness of wine...It will be like wine that has been strained and is held up against the sun shining brilliantly and showing its colour more clearly and flashing joyfully on the face of him who drinks in front of the sun.[21]

The images of wine and the sun indicate the somewhat ecstatic and mystical character of tears in Symeon. B. Krivochéine suggests the direct parallel between the passage quoted and the theme of 'sober intoxication', which is traditional for mystical literature, both Christian and non-Christian.[22] In fact, in this passage Symeon does not use the term 'intoxication', either 'divine' or 'sober';[23] only the image of wine is employed. However, the general idea of the 'sweetness' of tears is close to many Fathers, apart from Klimakos. John Chrysostom, in particular, speaks of the 'happiness' which is contained in weeping.[24] Neilos of Ancyra says that 'lamentation over one's sins brings a very sweet sadness and a bitterness which tastes like honey'.[25] Isaac the Syrian distinguishes between the two sorts of tears:

(p. 213)

> There are tears that burn and there are tears that anoint us as if with oil...At first a man must necessarily come to the [first] order of tears, and through them a door is opened unto him to enter into the second order, which is superior to the first; this is a realm wherein a man receives mercy...The body receives through [the second type of tears] a sort of nourishment, and gladness is imprinted upon the face.[26]

Isaac, therefore, recognizes the 'burning' tears of the beginners, and this might correspond to the first dimension of Klimakos' and Symeon's teaching on tears as full of pain and suffering; at the same time the second dimension, that is the notion of the 'sweet tears', is clearly outlined.[27]

Symeon constantly speaks of purification and deification as the fruits of tears. By compunction and tears, Symeon says, 'the inward man is purified and is filled with the divine light and wholly becomes the possession of the Holy Spirit in a contrite soul and a downcast mind'.[28] On the contrary, if we do not have sorrow and tears, there is no true repentance in us, without which man cannot achieve spiritual humility, be united with the Holy Spirit through purification, and come to the knowledge and contemplation of God.[29]

In Symeon's writings the theme of tears is very often linked with the theme of love for God. He suggests that one must have such love towards God 'that the mere mention of the name of Christ kindles one with the desire to see Him and moves one to tears'.[30] The identical idea is expressed by Isaac the Syrian when speaking about the perfect state of man: 'When the memory of God is stirred in his mind, straightaway his heart is kindled by the love of Him, and his eyes pour forth abundant tears.'[31]

Symeon also refers to tears of compassion for others and tears of prayer for the world. He speaks of a certain man, possibly of himself in the third person, who 'wept and groaned' over his disciples, and of another one who 'grievously mourned and lamented for those who fell in word or deed, as if he himself were truly responsible for all these things'.[32] Elsewhere Symeon openly speaks of his own tears for his monks.[33] The true Christian must 'unceasingly' weep for sinners, **(p. 214)** Symeon suggests.[34] This compassion for other people must be accompanied by such self-humiliation as to regard all other people, and all creatures, as blessed and saintly in comparison with oneself:

> His eyes will be like streams, issuing water as from a spring...That man will regard every other man as blessed and as an angel...and every beast and every reptile creeping on the ground, and everything that has the breath of life, he will regard as blessed...He has the same opinion of every soul and reveres it as if it were holy to the Lord.[35]

The same motif of adoration of all creatures as a fruit of tears we find in Isaac:

> What is the merciful heart?—It is the heart's burning for the sake of the entire creation, for men, for birds, for animals, for demons, and for every created thing; and by the recollection and sight of them the eyes of a merciful man pour forth abundant tears.[36]

The theme of tears in Symeon is often linked with the theme of the vision of God: in this he is again very close to Isaac. Let us indicate one of the most striking parallels between the two authors: their interpretation of Matt. 5: 4. Symeon writes:

> Blessed are those who constantly and with pain weep about their sins, for the light will accept them, and will transform their bitter tears into sweet ones. Blessed are those who, illumined by the divine light, recognize their own weakness...for they will always weep and will be bathed by the flow of their tears. Blessed are those who approach the divine light and enter inside it and become themselves light...for they will no longer shed bitter tears.[37]

In Isaac we read:

> Blessed, therefore, are pure in heart, for there is no time when they do not enjoy the delight of tears, and in this sweetness they see the Lord all the times. While tears are still wet in their eyes, they are deemed worthy of beholding His revelations at the height of their prayer, and make no prayer without tears. This is the meaning of the Lord's saying: 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.'[38]

(p. 215) In both authors tears and vision of God happen simultaneously and are in fact two sides of one gradual process of the transfiguration of the human person. Bitter tears are a means to reach the vision of God as light (thus Symeon). When God is seen, one's tears become sweet (thus both Isaac and Symeon). At this stage one is pure in heart, sees God all the time and beholds His revelations (Isaac); one sees the divine light and becomes oneself light (Symeon). One does not shed bitter tears any more (Symeon), for one is now comforted by God (Isaac). But the sweet tears are now shed unceasingly, for they have become an integral part of one's mystical life (Isaac and Symeon).

2. The Vision of God

The discussion of the theme of tears in Symeon has brought us to one of the most important features of his mysticism and theology: his teaching on the vision of God.

Let us first look more generally at how the theme of the vision of God is reflected in tradition. As V. Lossky indicates, as early as in the Bible we find two series of texts concerning the vision of God, which seem contradictory and mutually exclusive: 'Alongside passages...in which there can be found a formal negation of any vision of God, Who is

invisible, unknowable, inaccessible to created beings, there are others which encourage us to seek the face of God and promise the vision of God as He is.'[39]

Among the texts of the first group there are Exodus 33: 20–3 ('You cannot see My face, for man cannot see Me and remain alive');[40] 1 Tim. 6: 16 ('God...lives in unapproachable light; no man has seen Him or can see Him'); John 1: 18 ('No one has seen God at any time'); and others.[41] To the second group Lossky relates Gen. 32: 24–30 ('I have seen God face to face, and yet my soul is still alive'); Exod. 33: 11 and Deut. 34: 10 (God speaks to Moses 'face to face', as one speaks to a friend); Job 19: 25–7 ('In my flesh I shall see God. I shall see Him for myself...'); 1 John 3: 2 ('We shall see Him as He is'); 1 Cor. 13: 12 ('Now we see as in a mirror, darkly, then we shall see face to face').[42]

(p. 216) God is, therefore, both invisible and yet visible, according to the biblical revelation. This initial contradiction is reflected in Gregory of Nyssa with much distinctiveness:

> 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God' (Matt. 5: 8). God is promised to the vision of those whose heart has been purified. But 'no man has ever seen God', as the great John says (John 1: 18). And the sublime mind of Paul confirms this verdict when saying: 'Whom no man has seen, nor can see' (1 Tim. 6: 16)...All possibility of apprehension is taken away by the explicit denial: 'No man can see the Lord and remain alive' (Exod. 33: 20). Yet to see the Lord is eternal life...Do you realize the vertigo of the soul that is drawn to the depths contemplated in these words? If God is life, then the man who does not see Him does not see life. On the other hand, the divinely inspired prophets and Apostles testify that God cannot be seen. Is not the hope of man annihilated?[43]

The paradox of the Visible-invisible' in God is approached in patristic literature in several ways (which are not mutually exclusive, but, on the contrary, overlap one another). The first way to explain this paradox consists in placing it in the context of the notion of God's essence and energies:[44] God is invisible by His nature but may be seen in His energies, glory, goodness, revelations, etc. Thus, Gregory of Nyssa states that 'God is invisible by nature but becomes visible in His energies [*ἐνέργειαι*].'[45] John Chrysostom, recalling the visions of God by Moses, Isaiah, and other prophets, speaks of God's 'condescension' as what was revealed to them:

> All those instances were manifestations of God's condescension, and not the vision of pure Being itself, for if they [the prophets] had actually seen the very nature of God, they would not have beheld it under different appearances...What God actually is, not only have the prophets not seen, but not even angels or archangels...He has been seen by many, in whatever manner vision was possible for them, but no one has ever beheld His essence...[46]

The second way to solve the problem of Visible-invisible' includes the Christological dimension: God is invisible in His essence, but He reveals Himself in the human flesh of the Son. Ignatios of Antioch **(p. 217)** asserts that the Son is 'invisible and yet visible for our sake'.[47] Irenaeus speaks of the Son as 'the visible nature of the invisible Father'.[48] A work ascribed to Athanasios specifies that Christ is invisible before His Incarnation, but becomes visible through His union with humankind.[49] According to John Chrysostom, the Son of God, being as invisible as the Father by His divine nature, became visible when he put on the human flesh.[50] As Theodore the Studite wrote:

> Previously, when Christ was not in flesh, He was invisible,
> For 'no man', as it is said, 'hath seen God at any time' (John 1: 18).
> But when He puts on the coarse human flesh...
> He deliberately becomes palpable [*ἁπτός*]...[51]

The third way of approach to the problem seeks a solution from an eschatological perspective: God is invisible in the present life but will be seen by the righteous in the future kingdom of heaven. This eschatological dimension is implied in Job 19: 25–7, 1 John 3: 2, 1 Cor. 13:12 (all passages in the future tense); and it is, therefore, not surprising that we encounter it constantly in the Fathers. However much the righteous enter the vision of God in this life, Isaac the Syrian states, reflecting 1 Cor. 13: 12, 'they behold an enigma of His vision, like an image that is seen through a mirror; but yonder they behold the revelation of the truth.'[52] The vision of God is regarded by Theodore the Studite as a reward given in the future life. This is the constant theme of his admonitions: we should struggle and suffer here in order to see in the future life 'that immeasurable beauty, that ineffable glory of Christ's face'.[53] If we are pure and

undeflled here, Theodore promises, we shall see there all the saints, the Holy Virgin, 'and we hope to see there even the Lord of all and our Lord Himself, even though it is a bold thing to say'.[54]

The fourth way to explain the contradiction of 'visible–invisible' in God is to place it in the context of the idea of the purification of **(p. 218)** the soul that leads to deification: God is invisible for man in his fallen state but is seen by those who are purified and deified. This notion appears in Theophilos of Antioch who suggests that to see God one should be purified from sin.[55] When man's heart has been purified, Gregory of Nyssa says, 'he will see the image of the divine nature in his own beauty'.[56] According to John of Dalyatha ('Greek Isaac'), 'he who wishes to see God within himself devises means to cleanse his heart by the continuous memory of God, and thus through the purification of the eyes of his mind he will behold the Lord at all times.'[57]

Thus, the theme of vision of God had already been extensively discussed before Symeon in both Scripture and tradition. It is, therefore, not strange that he appeals to the authority of Scripture in order to confirm his own mystical teaching:

> He who says that he does not see or contemplate Your light, and especially he who says that it is impossible to see the light of Your divine glory, O Master, rejects all the writings of the prophets and Apostles, and Your own words and economy [*ἰìκονομία*], O Jesus.[58]

Neither is it surprising that Symeon seeks to confirm his teaching on the vision of God from patristic tradition, by claiming that all preceding Fathers shared the same teaching about the vision of the Holy Trinity as light:

> Yes, in that manner it indeed happens and indeed occurs,
> In that manner the grace of the Spirit is being revealed,
> And through Him and in Him—the Son with the Father.
> And a man sees Them, as far as it is possible [for him] to see,
> And then he is being taught by Them concerning Themselves, in an ineffable manner,
> And he utters and writes to everyone else,
> And expresses divine dogmas,
> As all preceding Holy Fathers teach.
> In that manner they produced [*ἐδογμάτισαν*] the divine Symbol;
> When they became such as we said,
> They spoke and uttered with God's help the things concerning God.[59]

(p. 219) Symeon, therefore, is confident that the whole of Orthodox tradition, including the Old and New Testaments ('prophets and Apostles'), patristic literature ('Holy Fathers') and even the Creed (the expression 'the divine Symbol' refers to the Nicaeo-Constantinopolitan Creed), is on his side when he claims that the vision of God is possible and necessary for the human being. He even asserts that tradition itself is nothing else but the product and fruit of vision of God by the divinely inspired Fathers: it is after they saw God as light that they spoke and wrote about God, expressing the church dogmas. This is an example of how Symeon regards mysticism as a foundation of Church dogmatic teaching and the latter as a confirmation of mystical experience.

At the same time Symeon is alert to the duality of the problem of the vision of God as reflected in Scripture and tradition. He does not hesitate to enter into a discussion of the biblical texts which deny the possibility of this vision. But he energetically refutes those who juggle with such texts as John 1: 18 in order to prove that the vision of God is impossible for human beings:

> [They say:] 'And who would dare to claim that he has seen God or has entirely contemplated Him? Away with you! It is written: "No man hath seen God at any time" [John 1: 18]' O, darkness! Who said this, tell me? 'The Only-begotten Son', they answer, 'Which is in the bosom of the Father, He declared this'. You say the truth, and your testimony is true, but it is against your soul. What will you respond if I show you the same Son of God telling you that it is possible? For He said: 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father' [John 14: 9]. And He said this not about the vision of His flesh, but about the revelation of His divinity...[60] That it is possible for us to see God, as far as our human nature allows, listen to Christ...Who says again: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God' [Matt. 5: 8].[61]

As we see, Symeon does not question the literal meaning of the denial of the possibility of the vision of God as expressed in John 1: 18, but merely places this verse in the context of the passages which **(p. 220)** speak of the revelation of the invisible God through Jesus Christ.[62]

It is noteworthy that another key text which denies the possibility of the vision of God, 1 Tim. 6: 16, is one of the most frequently cited scriptural verses in Symeon.[63] The latter, however, shows us how the verse should be understood:

> [He who practises God's commandments] is purified anew to the extent that he practises them, and becomes radiant and illumined; he is counted worthy to see revelations of great mysteries, the depth of which no one has ever seen nor is at all able to see [cf. 1 Tim. 6: 16]...From the Spirit Who renews him he obtains new eyes as well as new ears...God removes the veil from his eyes...Such a man sees God as far as it is possible for a human being to see Him and as far as God Himself allows it; he is anxious constantly to see Him and prays that he may see Him forever after death, being content to enjoy nothing else but the vision of God...[64]

God is, therefore, invisible for those who have the veil over their spiritual eyes and who have not yet been reborn. Here Symeon appeals to another traditional way of solving the problem of the invisibility of God, that is, the notion that God is seen by the 'new eyes' of the renewed and transfigured human person.

Hence, Symeon does not pass over in silence the passages which deny the possibility of the vision of God; on the contrary, he returns to them again and again. This is because the notion of the invisibility of God is one of the important components of Symeon's doctrine of the vision of God. In this vision, Symeon says, the intellect 'sees what is invisible' (*ἀόρατα καθορᾷ*).[65] Elsewhere he states, using extensively apophatic terms, that people

> see the ineffable beauty of God Himself invisibly, hold [God] without touching; without understanding they understand His image beyond image, His formless form...in a vision without vision.[66]

(p. 221) Symeon constantly repeats that God is totally invisible for all;[67] at the same time he claims to have vision of Him: 'God is invisible by His essence [*οὐσίᾳ*] and unapproachable by nature (*φύσει*), but I see Him'.[68]

What is, therefore, seen by Symeon, if God's essence is invisible? Most frequently he speaks of the divine light and fire as what appears to him;[69] he also speaks of divine glory (*δόξα*)[70] or 'the light of glory';[71] of the divine face,[72] 'the light of [God's] face',[73] 'the glory of [God's] face'[74], and 'the beauty of [God's] face'.[75] All these and similar expressions relate to what one may call 'divine attributes' and therefore correspond to the patristic notion of God as incomprehensible in His nature but comprehensible in His energies, or, in the case in question, invisible in His essence but visible in His attributes. Without presenting Symeon as one who, like Gregory Palamas later, could find no place for the Western idea of the 'beatific vision' of the essence of God, one must say that in his general assertion that the divine essence is invisible, he is close to the traditional Eastern approach to the problem of the vision of God.[76]

Symeon, then, understands the vision of God as a consequence of man's deification through Christ: 'If God, when He became man...deified me, the man whom He assumed, certainly I, when I become god by adoption, see Him Who is God by nature.'[77] In other words, there is an interdependence between the Incarnation of God, the **(p. 222)** deification of man and the vision of God: it is through Christ that man is deified and through deification that he sees God.

Generally, the Christological dimension in the theme of the vision of God is as important for Symeon as for many of his predecessors. The invisible God becomes visible in the humanity of Jesus Christ: Tor My sake You were seen on earth, born of the Virgin; being invisible before all ages, You became flesh and appeared as man,' Symeon says, appealing to Christ in one of his hymns[78] Symeon emphasizes that the invisible Creator is totally different (*διΐστηται*) by nature from all visible creatures, as light from darkness; but when God descended on earth, the mixture (*μῖξις*) of both took place, for the Saviour 'united the things that stand in opposition'.[79] The ontological abyss between the invisible and visible, the Creator and creature, the incorruptible and corruptible, was overcome when God became man:

> The Word became

Fully man, without change.
Being uncreated God by nature,
He became created in an unspeakable manner...
And he showed me a double marvel...
Both visible and invisible,
Seizable and unseizable...
Being in the midst of all
Sensible creatures,
The Word was seen, united
To what He had assumed as creature.[80]

Accordingly, the vision of God is often described by Symeon as the vision of Christ. There are many instances, especially in his 'Hymns' and 'Thanksgivings' but also in other writings, where Symeon speaks of his visions of Christ. Let us limit ourselves to one such vision,[81] which is important for us because Symeon himself draws there a parallel between his own experience and the experience of the Apostles. The vision in question is described in 'Hymn II, where Symeon reminds the reader that, after Christ's Ascension in heaven, only Stephen and no one else saw Him face to face (cf. Acts 7: 56). And yet, Christ appears now to Symeon:

(p. 223)

Even at night, even in the midst of darkness
I see Christ fearfully opening the heavens for me,
He Who humbles Himself and shows Himself to me,
With the Father and the Spirit, thrice-holy light,
One in three, and three in one single light...
I found Him, the One Whom I saw from afar,
The One Whom Stephen had seen when the heavens opened
And Whose sight had later blinded Paul [cf. Acts 9: 9],
Completely, like a fire, truly, in the centre of my heart...[82]

As we see, Symeon speaks of the vision of Christ, but at the same time states that Christ appears to him 'with the Father and the Spirit'. He explains that those who see Christ, see Him in the light of the Holy Spirit, and that they also contemplate the Father while seeing the Son.[83] In some other instances, Symeon speaks directly of the vision of the Holy Trinity, emphasizing that the three Hypostases are the one light which is contemplated by him and yet remains invisible.[84] Symeon uses the image of the face with two eyes to describe how the Holy Trinity appears to him.[85] The face of the Trinity, according to him, contains the characteristics of the three Persons, while being at the same time one and unique:

I saw Your face and was afraid,
Though it appeared as gentle and accessible.
Your beauty caused an ecstasy in me,
And an amazement, O Trinity, my God.
The characteristic of the three is the same in each of them,
And the three are one face, my God...[86]

The notion of the vision of the Trinity as one light may be found, before Symeon, in Gregory Nazianzen, who characterized the final stage of man's perfection as an unceasing contemplation of the Holy Trinity:

No longer from afar will I behold the truth,
As if in a mirror reflected on the water's surface.
Rather, the truth itself will I see with eyes unveiled,
The truth whose first and primary mark the Trinity is,
God as one adored, a single light in thrice-equal beams.[87]

(p. 224) There is, however, an obvious difference here between Symeon and Gregory: the latter places the vision of

the Trinity in an eschatological perspective, whereas in Symeon the vision takes place in the present life.

In general, the eschatological dimension of the theme of vision of God is present in Symeon, though he never limits this vision solely to the future life, as Theodore the Studite does. Symeon does say that the vision of God is 'more dim here and more perfect there' (*ἐνταῦθα ἀμυδρότερον κἀκεῖ τελεώτερον*).[88] He even admits that some people might not enter the divine light while they are still in body, and yet they will receive it after death.[89] At the same time he emphasizes that the vision of God is to be given to the righteous in the present life, arguing against those who understand Matt. 5: 8 as a promise relating to life after death:

> [They say:] 'Yes, it is true that the pure in heart shall see God, but it will happen in the age to come and not in this age.' Why and how will it be so, my dear? If it is said that God is seen through purity of heart, it is certain that as soon as purity is attained, the vision follows it...[90] If purity is here (*ἐνταῦθα*), the vision is also here; and if you say that the vision is only after death, you place purity also after death, and so it happens that you will never see God...[91]

It is clear that Symeon was much more inspired by the visions of God which he had experienced throughout his life, rather than by the hope of seeing God after death: according to him, the vision begins here and continues there, becoming more bright and perfect.

If we compare Symeon's assertions with the ideas of Theodore the Studite, according to whom it is 'bold' to speak even about the vision of God in the future life (see the quotation above), we will understand why Symeon's listeners might have perceived in his teaching a dangerous deviation from Theodore's line, and therefore, from what was commonly accepted in his time as tradition. Was it not, therefore, the 'boldness' of Symeon's concepts and of the way he expressed them that embarrassed his opponents? Indeed, such mystics as Gregory Nazianzen and Gregory of Nyssa, who also wrote of **(p. 225)** the vision of God, were widely known and appreciated (especially the first of them) in Christian circles of Symeon's time, but they were certainly regarded as representatives of the glorious past of the Church, of its 'golden age', which was already far behind. Symeon's adherence to Scripture and patristic tradition might have not seemed convincing enough, since it sounded like an appeal to the past which did not correspond to the reality of the present.

Without drawing any definite conclusions concerning the development of Eastern mysticism by the time of Symeon, we must remind ourselves that during more than three and a half centuries before Symeon, Byzantine tradition did not, to our knowledge, produce any distinguished mystical theologian: there was a chronological gap between Symeon and the last great mystical author before him, Maximos the Confessor. In his mystical teaching, Symeon was close to the fourth-century Gregory the Theologian and Makarios, to the seventh-century Isaac the Syrian and Maximos (as we shall also see when discussing other mystical themes below), much more than to the ninth-century Theodore the Studite, who was chronologically, as well as geographically, among his direct predecessors and whose writings were read aloud in all the monasteries of the Studite circle at the time of Symeon.[92]

One might conclude from the writings of Theodore that he simply did not have an experience of the direct vision of God in his earthly life since he does not speak about it in such a manner as Symeon does. However, the silence of Theodore about the vision of God can be explained by his realism as a spiritual director of monks and lay people: he was probably much more aware than Symeon of the fact that the majority of Christians did not have outstanding mystical gifts and did not constantly see God during their earthly life. He wanted to provide people with a secure hope for the future, whereas Symeon encouraged them to seek mystical experience in the present. Who was more traditional in this respect? Subsequent Orthodox tradition, at any rate, accepted both as outstanding teachers of the spiritual life and great saints.

(p. 226) 3. The Divine Light

The vision of God as light is definitely the most characteristic component of the mysticism of Symeon the New Theologian. This theme is touched upon in almost all of his poetical and prose works, and the terminology related to it is much more developed in him than in any other Byzantine writer of the preceding period.[93] This theme is also one of the most personal in him, thoroughly indebted to his extraordinarily intense mystical life, and he speaks of the vision of light primarily as a matter of his own experience. Dozens of pages in his writings are devoted to the descriptions of his visions of the divine light: needless to say, all these descriptions are fully original and

independent of any other literary source. Symeon even is so much engaged in the description and comprehension of his own experience of the vision of light that he is not specially interested in the scriptural episodes, such as the Transfiguration of Christ, which were often used as a starting point by other Fathers to express their theory of the divine light.[94]

Though Symeon was the first Byzantine author who put such a strong emphasis on the vision of light, this theme was discussed in Eastern patristic literature long before him. From the fourth century onwards monastic sources provide us with many examples of such discussions, clearly indicating that the vision of light was the common experience of many generations of monks and ascetics. Let us look briefly at how this experience is reflected in Evagrios Pontikos, Makarios of Egypt, Maximos the Confessor, and Isaac the Syrian as the authors whose doctrines are close to Symeon's. None of them **(p. 227)** created a developed theory of the vision of the divine light and none of them speaks so constantly and precisely of this vision as Symeon does; rather, they allude to it only occasionally. However, it is clear that, when referring to the divine light, they speak of the same kind of experience as Symeon, as will be illustrated by the passages quoted below.

The theme of light runs right through the writings of Evagrios, the first great monastic author.[95] One autobiographical passage from his *Antirritikos* (*Ἀντιῤῥητικός*) is devoted to the 'holy light' (*nuhrā qaddīša*)[96] which is seen by the 'eyes of the intellect':

> I and the servant of God Ammonios wanted to learn about this light: where is it from. We, therefore, asked Saint John of Thivais whether the nature of the intellect (*kyānā d-reʿyānā*) is radiant and the light proceeds from the intellect itself or something else appears from outside and illumines it. He answered and said: 'Man is unable to distinguish this; however, without the grace of God the intellect cannot be illumined during prayer'...[97]

Therefore, for all three personages mentioned the experience of the vision of light was common, but Ammonios and Evagrios tried to explain the nature of this experience, advancing the notion of the natural light of the intellect, whereas John of Thivais abstained from detailed discussion, emphasizing only that the light has a divine origin.

Evagrios posed to John the question of crucial importance: was the light that appeared to them a manifestation of the initial luminosity of the human intellect or was it rather a supernatural light of divine origin? In his other writings Evagrios answers this question himself. According to him, there is firstly 'the blessed light of the Holy Trinity' (*τὸ μακάριον φῶς τῆς ἁγίας Τριάδος*),[98] since 'God is light by His nature' (*b'ītūteh nuhrā (h)ū*)[99] At the same time there is also the light of the human intellect, its proper radiance (*τὸ οἰκεῖον φέγγος τοῦ νοῦ*).[100] Between the two lights, divine and human, there is a 'kinship': as the intellect is created after the image of God, its light is 'related to Him' (*αὐτῷ τὸ συγγενές φῶς*).[101]

(p. 228) At the time of prayer, the intellect of the one who has achieved dispassion (ἀπάθεια) is able to contemplate its own initial state of luminosity, becoming 'like light' (*'a(y)k nuhā*),[102] 'like a star' (*ἀσώ τρο-ειδής*)[103] and 'somewhat like a sapphire or heavenly colour'.[104] When 'the inner man' becomes a 'gnostic' (Syriac *yādō'tānā*, equivalent of the Greek *γνωστικός*), Evagrios says elsewhere, he contemplates the light of his own beauty (*nuhrā d-šuprā d-napšeh*, 'the light of the beauty of his soul').[105] In other words, both intellect and soul are transfigured during prayer: the first regains its initial light, the second its beauty. Evagrios explains this by means of the allegorical interpretation of Psalm 75: 3/76: 2: the 'rational soul' (*ψυχὴ λογική*) of man becomes the place of God, and the 'luminous intellect' (*νοῦς φωτοειδής*)—God's 'dwelling place'.[106]

But it is not only the light of the intellect that is seen by the dispassionate in the time of prayer; Evagrios also speaks of the vision of the trinitarian divine light. Thus, in his *Skemmata* (*Σκέμματα*, 'Reflections'), which survived under the name of Neilos of Sinai, we find the following two definitions:

> 1. The [initial] state [*κατάστασις*] of the intellect is the intelligible elevation, somewhat like heavenly colour; also the light of the Holy Trinity is imparted to the intellect in the time of prayer.[107]
> 2. Prayer is the state of the intellect when it becomes totally under the light of the Holy Trinity [*ὑπὸ φωτὸς μόνου γινομένη τῆς ἁγίας Τριάδος*].[108]

According to another Evagrian definition,

> The divine intellect (*mad'a 'alāhāyā*) is the intellect that is calm from all movements and is clothed in the light of the vision of the Trinity.[109]

The fiancée from the Song of Songs is a type of the intellect which contemplates the light of the Holy Trinity during prayer, Evagrios says.[110] He describes the encounter of the intellect with the divine light in terms of 'mingling':

> As fire [*nūrā*] possesses its own body with power, so the intellect will possess the soul with power when it is totally mingled [*netmazzag*] with the light [*nuhrā*] of the Holy Trinity.[111]

(p. 229) The Evagrian concept of light can be reduced to the following basic ideas: 1. the intellect sees its natural ('created') light in the time of prayer; 2. the intellect sees the light of the Holy Trinity ('uncreated'); 3. it sees the beauty of the soul; 4. it is mingled with the light of the Holy Trinity. The vision of light is considered by Evagrios as a fruit of dispassion (*ἀπάθεια*), chastity of the intellect, and prayer. He also emphasizes the necessity of God's co-operation (*συνέργεια*) to achieve this vision.[112]

Turning to the 'Makarian Homilies', we encounter in them several passages with references to the vision of the divine light. In one such passage, which contains an allegorical interpretation of Ezekiel 1: 1–2: 1, the question is about the state of the soul when it participates in the divine light:

> For the soul that is counted worthy to participate in the spirit of the Lord's light and illumined by the beauty of His unspeakable glory…becomes all light, all face, all eye…Like the sun that is the same all over, without any part behind or imperfect, but is completely all light…and like the fire, or the very light of fire, which is also entirely full of light…in the same manner the soul that is completely illumined with the unspeakable beauty of the glory of the light of Christ's face and perfectly participates in the Holy Spirit…becomes all eye, all light, all face, all glory, all spirit…[113]

Thus, deriving images from the prophecy of Ezekiel, Makarios tells us how man participates in the Holy Spirit and his soul is transformed in the divine light through illumination by the face of Christ.

Another important passage from the 'Makarian Homilies' (which will be treated more fully in the next section in connection with its clear ecstatic characteristics) is devoted to the different types of the vision of the divine light: sometimes, Makarios says, the holy cross appeared as light, and in other times, 'the very light itself shining in the heart opened up an interior, profound and hidden light'.[114] Elsewhere Makarios states that the Invisible One may be seen by worthy souls, who may 'taste His sweetness and enjoy in actual experience the goodness of the light of ineffable enjoyment'.[115] This motif of 'enjoyment' and 'sweetness' was to become important for other monastic writers who spoke of the vision of light. If Evagrios spoke **(p. 230)** of the 'eyes of the intellect' as the mystical organ which sees the divine light, Makarios speaks also of the 'eyes of the intellect' (*νοεροὶ ὀφθαλμοί*),[116] 'eyes of the heart' (*ὀφθαλμοὶ τῆς καρδίας*)[117] and the 'eyes of the soul' (*ὀφθαλμοὶ τῆς ψυχῆς*).[118]

In Maximos the Confessor, the notion of the vision of the divine light plays a significant röle. He describes the state of the intellect when it, being full of the 'desire of love' (*ἔρως τῆς ἀγάπης*) for God, goes out of itself and has no perception of itself and of creatures; 'for once illumined by the divine and infinite light, it remains insensible to any created being…'[119] The highest state of the intellect is when it finds itself in the light of the Holy Trinity, as Maximos states.[120]

Mystical illumination by the divine light takes place during prayer: in this Maximos is close to Evagrios. The highest type of prayer, according to Maximos, is when 'at the very onset of prayer the intellect is taken hold of by the divine and infinite light and is conscious…only of Him Who through love illumines it'.[121] Having reached this stage of prayer, the intellect becomes totally transfigured: 'by an enduring participation in the divine illumination it has become altogether shining bright', so that its passible element is transformed into 'a never-ending divine desire and unceasing love'.[122] The transfiguration of the intellect is described in Maximos in terms of 'mingling': 'the intellect is totally mingled (*ἐγκραθείς*) with the light of the Spirit.'[123]

The theme of the divine light was extensively discussed by the Syriac mystical writers of the seventh and eighth

centuries, especially by Isaac of Nineveh, Joseph Hazzaya, and John of Dalyatha.[124] In the works of Isaac the Syrian the term 'light' (Greek *φῶς*, Syriac **(p. 231)** *nuhrā*) occurs frequently, and the doctrine of the vision of light is generally close to the Evagrian; for instance, he also distinguishes between the two levels of light. There is, on the one hand, the divine light,[125] which is the light of the Holy Trinity.[126] On the other hand, there is the light of the human soul,[127] or of the intellect.[128] The illumination of man by the divine light takes place during prayer[129] or during the reading of the Scriptures.[130]

The most striking writing of the 'Greek Isaac' devoted to the theme of the divine light, 'Homily 43', belongs in fact to John of Dalyatha, in the writings of whom the theme of light occupies an even more prominent place than in Isaac. John speaks there of the divine light, which is the light of the Holy Trinity.[131] The divine light is sometimes described as 'the light from the Father',[132] or the light of the Holy Spirit;[133] at other times the question is of Christ, 'the light from the light of the Father'.[134] This light illumines the intellect.[135] When one is illumined by the divine light, one is filled with joy, contemplating at the same time one's own beauty:

> The sun that shines within him is the light of the Holy Trinity...Christ, the light of the Father's light, is [his] life, joy and happiness. Such a man is gladdened at all the times by the divine vision of his soul, as he is enthralled by his own beauty which is truly a hundredfold more resplendent than the brilliance of the sun itself...[136] This realm is a cloud of God's glory into which only the pure in heart may enter to behold the face of their Master and to have their intellects illumined by the ray of His light.[137]

It should also be pointed out that there is closeness between the concept of the divine light in 'Homily 43' of the 'Greek Isaac' and the 'Makarian Homilies': in both texts the light appears as the sun shining from within rather than from outside; it fills man entirely, giving him joy and happiness; it makes man see the beauty of his soul; it **(p. 232)** transforms man himself into light; it allows him to contemplate the 'face' of the Lord.

Returning to the Byzantine authors who speak of the vision of the divine light, let us mention also Diadochos of Photiki, Hesychios of Sinai and John Klimakos. The latter remarks that the truly obedient monk 'often suddenly becomes full of light and exultant during prayer'.[138] Once he alludes to his own vision of light, making it clear, however, that it was the vision of an angel.[139] According to Hesychios, the guarding of the intellect leads one to such a state that one sees a glorious light of God; all ascetics who have reached this state 'bathe in a sea of pure and infinite light, touching it ineffably and living and dwelling in it'.[140] Diadochos says, among other things, that 'the intellect, when it begins to be strongly energized by the divine light, becomes so completely translucent that it sees its own light vividly'.[141] This is again a reminiscence of the Evagrian distinction between the two levels of light.

Apart from the patristic tradition as such, we find many references to the vision or appearance of the divine light in both hagiographical literature and liturgical books. In particular, Anthony the Great, before hearing the voice of Christ, 'saw the ray of light descending unto him'.[142] Another Egyptian ascetic, Paul, three days before his death, tells his listeners: 'The light [of God] never forsook my heart; being lightened by it, I needed no sleep, but the desire to see Him always flamed up within me...This intellectual light (*lux mentis*) has never been extinguished in me.'[143] As regards the liturgical books of the Orthodox Church, the texts devoted to the feast of the Transfiguration of Christ are probably the best example of how the idea of the human participation in the divine light penetrates the church office.[144]

(p. 233) Let us now look at Symeon's visions of the divine light. From Chapter 1 of this study we remember the first of them, described by Symeon in the third person in *Cat*. 22. Another one, depicted in *Cat*. 16 also in the third person (following the tradition that derives from Paul: cf. 2 Cor. 12: 2), has many details in common: the hero of the narration is suddenly moved to tears while he is standing in prayer; he falls down and sees a great immaterial light; he loses self-consciousness and forgets about the earth.[145]

If in the 'Catechetical Discourses', addressed to his monks, Symeon sometimes felt obliged to speak about his experience of the vision of light in a somewhat indirect manner (as in *Cat*. 16 and 22), his two 'Thanksgivings' represent a kind of mystical autobiography, where Symeon thanks God openly for the revelations and visions of which he was counted worthy. In *Euch*. 1, after the description of his first vision of light,[146] Symeon speaks of the second vision, when the ray (*ἀκτίς*) appeared in his intellect, and the light descended upon his head, as a 'small and flame-shaped cloud'.[147] Then Symeon describes his subsequent visions, giving us to understand that they were

numerous throughout his life:

> I have frequently seen light, sometimes within me...and sometimes it appeared externally, from afar, or even it was completely hidden, and by its hiddenness caused me unbearable pain, because I thought I would never see it again. But when I again lamented and wept...it appeared like the sun which penetrates through the thickness of the clouds and gradually shows itself as a gently glowing sphere.[148]

Symeon, therefore, distinguishes between the vision 'from outside' and vision 'from within', the latter being the most powerful and delightful: in both cases, however, the question is about the divine and uncreated light (rather than of the natural intellectual light). Like the preceding authors, Symeon refers to the vision of the 'face' of Christ in the light:[149] it is clear, however, that he is not speaking of, or referring to the appearance of the 'face' in any form or shape. Perhaps the new element in Symeon is that the dynamics of mystical **(p. 234)** experience include periods of abandonment by God as a necessary, though painful, element, references to which accompany many of his descriptions of the vision of light.[150] The theme of abandonment was widely discussed in ascetical literature before Symeon,[151] but not in such a mystical and personal way as Symeon treats it.

In *Euch*. 2 Symeon shows that the divine light, which regularly appeared to him, gradually became more and more recognizable:

> From then on...You came to me more frequently...and made me see more clearly the light of Your face. Yet immediately You flew away...Coming at times and then going away in such a manner, You gradually appeared to me more and more fully...granting me to see [You] more obviously, and giving me more light.[152]

Symeon then describes several of his subsequent visions, making clear that they became more frequent as time went on.

Let us now indicate some most important characteristics of Symeon's doctrine of the vision of light, deriving primarily from his 'Hymns', in order to reveal the points of correspondence and difference between Symeon and preceding writers.

First of all, it is clear that for Symeon the divine light is not an angel or any created being or phenomenon.[153] According to Symeon, the divine light is God Himself in His revelation to the human person. 'Your light is You, O my God', he says in one of his hymns.[154] As in Syriac mystics, the light is sometimes identified in Symeon with the Holy Trinity;[155] at other times it is identified with the Holy Spirit.[156] Quite regularly Symeon also speaks of the vision of Christ as light.[157] It is still, however, an experience of pure luminosity: Symeon never speaks of Christ as appearing in a visible image, but only of the light and sometimes the voice of Christ.[158] Incidentally, **(p. 235)** let us mention that Symeon never describes a vision of the Mother of God,[159] and only once does he mention the vision of a saint, namely his spiritual father Symeon the Studite, near the divine light.[160]

Next, the light which Symeon describes is not a physical or material phenomenon: it is characterized as 'immaterial' (*ἄϋλος*),[161]'simple, formless, altogether non-composite, bodiless and inseparable'.[162] Using apophatic expressions, Symeon emphasizes that the divine light is beyond any categories of matter or form, as well as beyond human speech and understanding: it is 'like a treasure which is ineffable, unspeakable, without quality or quantity, without image or matter or form, which is formed in overwhelming beauty, which is all simple as the light that transcends all light'.[163] The last expression recalls the Dionysian theory of the divine light as 'supra-light' which is not comparable with any material light; without going so far in his apophaticism as to describe the divine light in terms of 'darkness', Symeon clearly indicates that the term 'light' must not be understood in the sense of material light: the term only symbolizes the reality that is far beyond any human word.[164]

Being immaterial, the divine light is 'intelligible',[165] which means that it has an effect firstly upon the intellect (*νοῦς*),[166] shining in it,[167] illumining it,[168] purifying it,[169] catching it up in mystical rapture to **(p. 236)** God.[170] Unlike Evagrios and other preceding writers, Symeon does not usually speak of the natural light of the intellect, but only of the divine light which illumines the intellect from outside or from within.

The divine light, Symeon says, is invisible to one's bodily eyes,[171] but is seen with the intellect or rather with what Symeon calls 'the eye of the intellect' (*ὀφθαλμὸς τοῦ νοός*).[172] 'the noetic eye of the intellect' (*νοεροὸς ὁ τοῦ νοὸς*

ὀφθαλμός),[173] 'the intelligible eyes of heart' (*ὀφθαλμοὶ νοεροὶ τῆς καρδίας*),[174] 'the eyes of the soul' (*ψυχῆς οἱ ὀφθαλμοί*),[175] 'the intelligible eyes of the soul' (*νοεροὶ τῆς ψυχῆς ὀφθαλμοί*)[176], etc. Sometimes Symeon even asserts that the divine light is 'inaccessible to the intelligible eyes of heart'[177] at other times he says otherwise, namely that the Inaccessible One becomes 'accessible to my intelligible eyes'.[178] Symeon also speaks of the spiritual 'mouth' and 'hands' by means of which the ascetics participate in the divine light:

> They see in abundance the simple light of God's divinity with their intellectual eyes; they touch it with immaterial hands in irresistible love (*ἀκατασχέτῳ τῷ ἔρωτι*); they eat it without eating with the spiritual mouth of their intellect and soul, without being able to be satiated by the contemplation of its beauty and sweetness.[179]

The mystical vocabulary of this passage is remarkably close to that of the preceding Fathers quoted above, who also speak of the divine light as seen by 'the eyes of the intellect' (Evagrios, Makarios), of its unspeakable beauty (Makarios), of its being touched in an ineffable manner (Hesychios), of the sweetness that is tasted and joy that is experienced during the vision (Makarios, 'Greek Isaac'), of the loving desire (*ἔρως*) which accompanies the vision (Maximos). Employing the unusual images of 'touching' and 'eating' the light, Symeon points to the total and intimate union between the mystic and the light during the vision, emphasizing the all-embracing and all-absorbing character of this experience. In another instance, when speaking of the transformation of the soul by the light, he employs the language of 'embracement' by the light or 'immersion' in it:

(p. 237)

> God becomes for those who are worthy
> Like a divine and luminous pool,
> Embracing them all...
> The divine Spirit...
> Being Himself light without sunset,
> Transforms all those in whom He lives
> Into light...[180]

In Symeon the patristic notion of the transformation and transfiguration of human nature by virtue of the vision of the divine light has undergone considerable development. As was indicated above, some earlier Fathers asserted that, during this vision, the intellect sees its own natural light (Evagrios, Diadochos), the mind shines brightly (Maximos), the soul becomes all fire and light (Makarios), and the transfigured man contemplates his own beauty (Evagrios, 'Greek Isaac'). The experience of Symeon proves that the whole of human nature, including the intellect, the soul, and even the body, is transfigured by the divine light. This is one of the central ideas of Symeon, to which he constantly returns. When you see the divine light, he says, 'your body shines, and so does your soul, for your soul then...becomes as resplendent as God Himself'.[181] In *Cat*. 22 Symeon says that the young George, when seeing the divine light, 'thought that he himself became light'.[182] Elsewhere Symeon describes how he contemplates his own beauty when seeing the divine light:

> He shines in my poor heart,
> Illumining me from every side by His immortal radiance,
> Lightening all my members by His rays...
> I partake of His light, I participate in His glory,
> And my face shines as the face of my Beloved,
> And all my members become light-bearing.
> I become then more beautiful than the most beautiful..
> And much more precious than all visible things...[183]

(p. 238) Below, in the section on Symeon's teaching on the deification of man, we shall return to the notion of the transfiguration of the human body, which constitutes the most original element in the texts quoted and in many similar passages. What is important for us now is that Symeon's idea that man, during the mystical vision of light, becomes himself transformed into light and contemplates his own beauty was anticipated by some of the preceding church Fathers, particularly by Makarios and the 'Greek Isaac'.

Symeon's imagery of the vision of light is of exceptional interest because of its richness and diversity, especially in the 'Hymns'. He normally employs images which had become traditional for mystical literature side by side with those characteristic of his own usage. It has already been mentioned that Symeon widely employed the traditional image of the sun: he speaks of the vision of God as the sun,[184] of the sun shining in his heart,[185] of the sun shining in his hands,[186] of the intelligible sun,[187] the sweet sun,[188] the inaccessible sun,[189] the sun without sunset,[190] the dazzling sun,[191] of the sun's disk,[192] the sun's rays,[193] the sun's beauty,[194] of the supra-solar light.[195] If the image of the moon is only occasionally employed by Symeon,[196] the image of a star appears more frequently.[197] Among other images and terms connected with light are: *λαμπάς* (lamp, candle),[198] *λαμπηδών* (lamp)[199] and *λύχνος* (lantern);[200] *αἴγλη* (radiance),[201] *φάος* (glow),[202] and *σέλας* (radiance);[203] the cloud of light (*φωτὸς νεφέλη*)[204] and luminous teat (*μαζὸς φωτοειδής*).[205] The striking image of the lightning, which blinds one by its brightness, occurs in the 'Chapters'.[206] The image of the oyster which, when the sun's ray penetrates through its open folds, gives birth to a pearl, is also remarkable.[207] Sometimes different images are joined in one descripion **(p. 239)** of the divine light: 'I see You like the sun and like a star, I carry You in my belly like a pearl and see You like a lamp that is lit inside a vessel.'[208] At other times different images indicate different degrees of the vision: 'You are seen from afar, like the rising star, and then You grow little by little...and are seen like the sun'.[209]

In Symeon's imagery of light, warm and bright colours are thoroughly dominant. Symeon's light is not a cool luminescence of the moon, but is dazzling sunshine or the blazing radiance of fire. The image of fire occupies an important place in Symeon's mysticism; he describes how divine fire purifies the soul and makes it full of light and radiance:

> God is fire: and He came to send fire on the earth (Luke 12: 49)...If [this fire] is lit in someone, it grows in him until it becomes a great flame and reaches heaven...The burning of the soul that is inflamed by it does not occur in an unconscious manner [*ἀγνώστως*]...but in full assurance and knowledge [*ἐν αἰσθήσει καὶ γνώσει*]...Having entirely purified us from stain of passions, [this fire] becomes our food and drink, illumination and joy within us, and it makes us light by participation...When the soul...is united with the divine and immaterial fire...then the body as well becomes by participation [*κατὰ μέθεξιν*] the fire of this divine and unspeakable light.[210]

This happened to Peter and Paul and other Apostles, Symeon continues, and to the Holy Fathers, who 'destroyed all heresies by this divine fire': it happens also to all those who love God to such a degree as not to spare their lives for Him.[211]

At this point Symeon is very close to the author of the 'Makarian Homilies'. The latter also speaks of the kindling of the soul by the fire of God,[212] of the illumination of the soul by the divine light which occurs 'in assurance and knowledge' (*διὰ γνώσεως καὶ αἰσθήσεως*).[213] He describes how the soul becomes inflamed by the **(p. 240)** fire,[214] and how the body participates in the transfiguration of human nature.[215] He also cites Paul and other Apostles as examples of people who were inflamed by the divine fire.[216]

Generally, in his usage of the image of fire Symeon is close to Makarios. Symeon writes of the light which burns like fire[217] and appears like a cloud of fire;[218] the sun that appears as globe-shaped and light-like fire;[219] the fire of Christ's divinity,[220] the fire of divine love and desire;[221] the fire that falls into the heart[222] and illumines the soul.[223] This fire is characterized by Symeon as 'divine'[224] and 'spiritual'.[225] According to Symeon, divine fire is 'inaccessible, uncreated, invisible, eternal, immaterial, totally immutable, infinite by itself, inextinguishable, immortal, limitless'.[226] Describing divine fire, Symeon often uses dynamic image of flame;[227] he speaks of mystical movements of fire and light: 'O, inebriation of light, O, movements of fire, O, scintillations [*περιδροαί*] of flame in me!'[228]

To summarize what has been noted, some of the more important characteristics of the light in Symeon can be specified: 1. this light is not the created light of the intellect, but the uncreated, divine light of the Holy Trinity; 2. it is non-material and is not perceived through the sensible eyes, but through the spiritual 'eyes of the intellect'; 3. it is formless and shapeless, being totally beyond human categories of shape and form; 4. it transfigures the human person, including the intellect, soul, and body; 5. the 'face' of God is seen inside the light, but in a spiritual manner rather than in any visible form.

As far as the link between Symeon and preceding Fathers is concerned, it can be stated that Symeon's doctrine of the

vision of light **(p. 241)** definitely had its prehistory in patristic literature, particularly in the writings of Evagrios, Makarios, Maximos, and Isaac the Syrian. Being close to these writers in many ideas, Symeon was generally independent of any of them in his treatment of the theme of vision of light, always basing himself primarily upon his own experience. He was also the first Byzantine author for whom the vision of light was the main goal of all ascetical exploits and good deeds and who claimed with such decisiveness that

> We practise all this asceticism and all these actions only in order to partake of the divine light, like a lamp, so that we may bring our souls as a single candle to the inaccessible light.[229]

4. Ecstasy

Many of Symeon's visions of the divine light have distinctively ecstatic characteristics, such as loss of consciousness, forgetfulness of self and of exterior surroundings, withdrawal from the body. Let us now look at his understanding of ecstasy in general and some of the ecstasies which he underwent in particular, comparing his theory and experience with what the Christian tradition knows about this mystical phenomenon.

The term *ἔκστασις* (literally 'going out', 'withdrawal'), which occurs several times in the Septuagint,[230] has been used in Christian ascetical literature with two main meanings. The first is entirely negative: the alienation or destruction of mind (frenzy) caused by various factors, particularly by sins or by demons. Examples of such a usage might be found in Origen and Evagrios: the latter speaks of the 'final evil, which is frenzy of mind and madness [*ἔκστασις φρενωῦ καὶ μανία*], with many demons seen in the air', as fruits of pride.[231] Earlier a similar usage was observed in Symeon the Studite.[232]

A second meaning of the term can be translated as 'amazement' or 'wonder' and contains positive implications. In many Christian **(p. 242)** authors it is related to a special mystical state which is sometimes called 'rapture in God' and which is characterized by the withdrawal of the mind from the body, loss of body sensation and other mental and physical phenomena. Ecstasy has existed in various forms in many religions: it existed in both ancient Greece and ancient Israel.[233]

The early Church knew many examples of mystical ecstasy. The ecstasy of Peter is described in Acts 10: 10 (cf. 22: 17 ff.), and that of Paul in 2 Cor. 12: 2–4. In the last case the term *ἔκστασις* is not employed: Paul speaks of his *ἁρπαγή*, 'rapture', when he did not know whether he was still in body or not. The author of the Apocalypse uses the biblical expression 'to be in the Spirit [*ἐν πνεύματι*]' relating to his ecstatic states (see Apoc. 1: 10; 4: 2; 17: 3; 21: 10). In the early Church ecstasy was often accompanied by glossolalia, as in the case of Pentecost (see Acts 2: 4).

Descriptions of ecstasy occur very often in hagiographical literature.[234] Anthony the Great, according to his biographer, once 'became as if in ecstasy' (*ὥσπερ ἐν ἐκστάσει γέγονε*) during his manual work;[235] at another time he 'felt himself in rapture of mind' (*ἤσθετο ἑαυτὸν ἁρπαγέντα τῇ διανοίᾳ*) during the prayer of the ninth hour.[236] Abba Vissarion (fourth century) is reported to have spent forty days in a state of ecstasy.[237] Silouanos was seen in ecstasy many times.[238] Poimin, being in ecstasy, was brought to the place 'where the Holy Virgin was weeping near the Cross of Jesus Christ'.[239] Isidoros is reported to have been caught up in ecstasy during common meals.[240] In some pieces of hagiography ecstasies are so common that almost all positive heroes of the narration would constantly experience them; in the 'Life of St. Symeon the Stylite', for example, there are more than fifteen ecstasies mentioned: of Symeon himself,[241] of his mother Martha,[242] of archimandrite **(p. 243)** John,[243] of Conon,[244] of Theosevia,[245] and of the crowd of people.[246]

Among Byzantine theologians, Gregory of Nyssa, Dionysios, and Maximos the Confessor were the three authors who gave much attention to the phenomenon of ecstasy. In Gregory, ecstasy is often described in terms of 'sober intoxication', 'watchful sleep', Vertigo', 'impassioned love' (*ἔρως* or *ἀγάπη*), 'elevation', and 'reaching forward' (*ἐπέκτασις*); the image of the biblical Moses who ascends into the 'divine darkness' of Mount Sinai (Exod. 34), traditionally regarded as a type of the true ecstatic, as well as the love imagery of the Song of Songs, are widely employed by Gregory.[247] Dionysios in his terminology of ecstasy depends on the Neo-Platonists, employing negative terms, and on Gregory of Nyssa, using the symbolism of darkness. In the Dionysian system ecstasy is deeply connected with love for God, and is characterized as sudden rapture in God with deprivation of any positive thought, as union with God, highest contemplation (*θεωρία*) and supra-intellectual 'knowledge' (*γνωῦσις*).[248]

Maximos the Confessor knows higher states of mind in which it is 'ravished by divine knowledge and goes out [of itself]',[249] ascending to God, becoming alien to all things,[250] and taking 'unceasing delight in the divine beauty'.[251] In general, Maximos accepts the Dionysian theory of ecstasy, incorporating at the same time some Evagrian ideas: as P. Sherwood shows, Maximos understands ecstasy as a realization of the image and likeness of God in man and as union with God, which is a fruit of the transformation of man by divine grace and is equal to deification.[252]

As far as ascetical literature is concerned, we find occasional mentions of ecstasy in John Klimakos, who defines a true monk as 'an unceasing ecstasy'[253] and speaks of the ecstatic vision of the divine **(p. 244)** light.[254] Theodore the Studite mentions a spiritual state in which 'the soul rejoices with great joy and enjoys sweetness without satiation, dwelling in thoughts about God and so deepening the contemplation of His greatness as to forget itself'.[255]

However, much more developed descriptions of ecstasy occur in Makarios of Egypt and Isaac the Syrian; some of their key texts relating to this subject are worth quoting here. In Makarios, the vision of the divine light has various ecstatic characteristics:

> A person comes to kneel down [in prayer], and at once his heart is filled with the divine energy, and his soul exults with the Lord, as a bride with the bridegroom...It happens that...the inner man is caught up [*ἁρπάζεται*] in prayer and plunged into the infinite depths of that other world with great sweetness...At some other time a man during the prayer was caught into ecstasy [*ὡς ἐν ἐκστάσει γέγονεν*]...At yet another time the very light itself, shining in the heart, opened up an interior, profound and hidden light, so that the whole person was completely drowned with that sweet contemplation, and was not any more in control of himself, but became like a fool [*μωρός*] and a barbarian toward this world because of excessive love and sweetness, and the hidden mysteries that were revealed to him.[256]

We actually encounter here descriptions of different types of ecstasy, which are characterized by loss of self-control, withdrawal from this world, sweetness, exultation, increase of love, and vision of the divine light.

Some descriptions of ecstasy are to be found in Isaac the Syrian.[257] We should note that the Syriac language does not know a word which would directly correspond to the Greek *ἔκστασις*: in the original version of Isaac, the words *temhā* or *tehrā* (both translated as 'wonder'), as well as other synonyms, serve as very approximate equivalents.[258] As to the Greek version of Isaac, the term *ἔκστασις* occurs there several times. In one of his descriptions of mystical 'wonder' Isaac mentions some physical phenomena which accompany it:

> It often happens that when a man bends his knees in prayer and stretches forth his hands to the heavens, fixing his eyes upon the cross of Christ and concentrating all his thoughts on God during his prayer...suddenly and **(p. 245)** without warning a fountain springs up in his heart gushing forth sweetness; his members grow feeble, his eyesight is veiled, he bows his head to the earth, and his thoughts are altered so that because of the joy which surges throughout his entire body he cannot make prostrations.[259]

Isaac calls this state 'spiritual inebriation' and even compares it with madness.[260] As we can see, there are many similar details in Makarios' and Isaac's descriptions of ecstasy: in both it begins suddenly during prayer with prostrations, is accompanied by spiritual sweetness, affects not only the soul but also the body; both emphasize its irrational character ('foolishness' in Makarios, 'madness' in Isaac).

Insisting upon the necessity of prayer as a means to attaining ecstasy, Isaac refers to the ecstatic experience of the saints:

> We see that when St. Anthony was standing at the prayer of the ninth hour, he perceived that his intellect was taken up.[261] And when another Father stretched out his hands while standing at prayer, he entered an ecstasy for the period of four days. And likewise many others through prayer were taken captive by their strong recollection of God and their love for Him, and thus came to ecstasy [Syriac 'were granted this gift'].[262]

Elsewhere, speaking of the termination of prayer when the intellect goes into ecstasy, Isaac confirms his concepts by two definitions from the Evagrian *Skemmata*, which were cited above (in the Greek version of Isaac both are ascribed to 'Gregory the Theologian'):

1. Prayer is the purity of the intellect, and it is terminated only by the light of the Holy Trinity through ecstasy;
2. Purity of intellect is the lofty flight of noetic faculties...through which the light of the Holy Trinity shines at the time of prayer.[263]

Both the reference to the experience of the saints and the quotations from patristic sources indicate that Isaac wanted to support the doctrine of ecstasy based on his own experience with a measure of approval from tradition.

Returning to Symeon, we find that he very often mentions **(p. 246)** *ἔκστασις*, regarding this term as a synonym of *ἁρπαγή* ('rapture in God') and *ἀλλοίωσις* ('change').[264] Symeon experienced different ecstasies throughout the whole of his life. His first vision of light at the age of twenty was accompanied by loss of consciousness, tears, amazement, and other phenomena which might be characterized as ecstatic.[265] The description of another vision in *Cat*. 16 is full of references to ecstasy. Here Symeon says that, before the vision took place, he was having supper with his elder, during which he was sitting 'as if in ecstasy' (*ὥσπρερ ἐξεστηκώς*), burning with the desire for union with God.[266] After supper, having returned to his cell, he started to recite the prayer 'O Holy God' (*Trisagion*):

At once I was so greatly moved to tears and love for God, that I would be unable to describe the joy and delight I then felt. Immediately I fell prostrate on the ground and saw, behold, a great light that was immaterially shining on me and seized hold of my whole mind and soul, so that I was struck with amazement at the unexpected marvel and was as if in ecstasy [*ὡς ἐν ἐκστάσει*]. Nor is this all; I forgot the place where I stood, and who I was, and where, and could only cry out: 'Lord, have mercy', so that when I came to myself I recognized that I was saying this. But who was speaking in me...I do not know—God knows. Whether I was in the body, or out of the body when I conversed with this light—only the light itself knows this [cf. 2 Cor. 12: 2].[267]

Symeon then says that the vision so strengthened his muscles and limbs that he did not feel any weariness and even thought he was stripping himself of the body.[268]

Another ecstasy is described by Symeon in *Euch*. 2, which is also autobiographical:

I saw again an awesome mystery. Seizing hold of me and ascending to heaven, You took me up with You—whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know [2 Cor. 12: 2], You alone know, Who had done this. But when I had spent some time with You there, struck with wonder at the greatness of the glory...and astounded at the measureless height, I was totally awestruck (*ὅλος ἔφριξα*).[269]

(p. 247) Now, all three ecstasies (in *Cat*. 22, *Cat*. 16, and *Euch*. 2) have much in common with each other and also with the descriptions by Makarios and Isaac the Syrian quoted above. First of all, in both Makarios and Isaac on the one hand, and in Symeon's descriptions on the other, the ecstasy begins during prayer, is connected with the vision of light and is accompanied by tears, joy, and sweetness, as well as by certain physical phenomena, such as loss of self-consciousness and withdrawal from the world.

As one may notice, Symeon's descriptions of ecstasy are generally more dramatic than those found in preceding authors. To illustrate this again, let us quote one of the most dramatic descriptions of ecstasy, which is contained, surprisingly, in Symeon's 'Chapters', the work that is generally unadorned in its expression.[270] Here Symeon suggests a direct link between ecstasy and deification:

He who has within himself the light of the all-holy Spirit, being unable to bear the sight of it, falls prostrate on the ground, cries out and shouts in amazement [*ἐν ἐκπλήξει*] and great fear, as one who sees and experiences the thing beyond nature, word or understanding. He becomes like a man whose entrails are touched by fire; being scorched with flame, he is not able to bear this burning, and becomes like one in ecstasy [*ὥσπερ ἐξεστηκώς*]...He pours out more tears and, being purified by their flood, shines with a greater brilliance. And when, being totally inflamed, he becomes light, then is accomplished what is said: 'God united with gods and known by them; and this is, probably, to the extent that He is already united with those who are attached to Him, and revealed to those who have known Him'.[271]

This final quotation from Gregory, together with the references to St. Paul's epistles, which were observed above

show us that Symeon was himself aware of the traditional character of his ecstasies. Elsewhere he also refers to the experience of the saints when writing about ecstasy.[272] All of this points to a closeness between Symeon and Isaac, who also refers to the experience of the saints and quotes Gregory (in the Greek version).

Having observed the general similarity between Symeon and preceding authors in their concept of ecstasy, let us point out one particular item of difference. In the majority of authors, ecstasy is **(p. 248)** described as a rare phenomenon: Paul gives the impression that he had no more than one ecstasy in fourteen years (2 Cor. 12: 1); John Klimakos appears to have had it only once (and indeed he saw an angel and not God Himself).[273] In some pieces of hagiographical literature, as well as in Makarios and Isaac the Syrian, ecstasy is presented as a more frequent phenomenon; nevertheless, it is generally regarded as a state of the perfect and as one of the obvious signs of sanctity.

Symeon, on the contrary, expresses the idea that ecstasy which is accompanied by loss of consciousness and other similar physical phenomena is a state characteristic of those who have only just entered spiritual life rather than of advanced ascetics:

> Such rapture of the intellect is characteristic not of the perfect but of beginners…For the soul which progresses little by little, as it becomes accustomed to the vision of the intelligible light, frees itself from an excessive enthusiasm [*της πολλης ἐκπλήξεως ἐξίσταται*], being initiated into the contemplation which is more perfect and higher than this stage…Seeing the immaterial light, the soul is altogether in ecstasy [*ὅλη καθόλου ἐξίσταται*], totally in wonder [*ὅλη ἐκπλήττεται*]…In this state it remains, as if it were caught up to heaven and forced to be there and…to see [the light] day and night…[274]

There are, therefore, two different stages of ecstasy: the impulsive, enthusiastic, and rare ecstasy of the beginners and the unceasing ecstasy of the perfect, which is the contemplation of the divine light without loss of consciousness or withdrawal from the body; the first type of ecstasy must be gradually replaced by the second.

This notion is probably due to Symeon's own evolution as a mystic—from the dramatic and rare ecstasies of his youth[275] to the more frequent but perhaps less emotional visions and revelations of his old age. Nikitas, who knew Symeon during the last years of the latter's life, speaks of his 'usual visions and illuminations' (*τῶν συνήθων θεωριῶν καὶ ἐλλάμψεων*).[276] Symeon's mystical experience was, therefore, **(p. 249)** quite extraordinary even in comparison with other great representatives of Christian tradition. What was described by Paul as an event of fourteen years' prescription, about which he was still proud (cf. 2 Cor. 12: 2–4), was experienced by Symeon many times, not to say regularly. What was commonly acknowledged as achievements of the great saints evoking the amazement of hagiographers, was regarded by Symeon as appropriate to beginners.

5. Dispassion

The theme of dispassion was one of the issues in the argument between Symeon and his contemporaries; it was also one of the leitmotivs in his writings. Why was this notion so important for Symeon, and what does the term 'dispassion' entail in the context of his spiritual doctrine and the patristic tradition in general?

The word *ἀπάθεια* ('dispassion') has its origin in ancient Greek philosophy, where it meant impassibility, insensibility, freedom from suffering, the opposite of *πάθος* ('passion', 'suffering').[277] In Stoicism it reflected an ideal of dispassionateness, calmness, lack of emotions, and was used to characterize the true *σοφός* ('wise man').[278] Plotinus regarded *ἀπάθεια* as detachment from all sensible things, renunciation of relatives and friends, liberation from all emotions and desires, and the mind itself;[279] one's mind should be dispassionate in order to be able to penetrate into intelligible reality.[280]

In Christian authors, the Stoic origin of the word is still discernible.[281] In particular, Clement of Alexandria speaks of *ἀπάθεια* as indifference to everything, which is required from the true *γνωστικός* **(p. 250)** (equivalent of Stoic *σοφός*).[282] Origen speaks also of 'purification' and 'nakedness' from passions.[283] According to Evagrios, the soul must remain imperturbable not only to things but also to the memory of them.[284] Maximos the Confessor distinguishes the four steps of *ἀπάθεια*: 1. immobility of the body to sinful deeds; 2. complete rejection by the soul of any passionate thoughts; 3. complete immobility of the desiring part of the soul (*ἐπιθυμία*) to passions; 4. complete renunciation of any sensible image of passions.[285] All four levels of *ἀπάθεια* are defined through negative terms.

Side by side with this usage of the word, another meaning of it developed, expressed in positive terms: *ἀπάθεια* as mastery over passions and possession of all virtues, including humility and love. Already Evagrios speaks of *ἀπάθεια* as full of divine love: 'The condition of prayer ought to be impassible, seizing the philosophical and spiritual mind into the intelligible height of the most extreme love' (*ἔρωτι ἀκρωτάτῳ*).[286] According to John Klimakos, 'dispassion possesses the beauty of virtues' (*τὰς ἀρετὰς κόσμον*);[287] it is 'the most perfect and endless perfection of those who are perfect' (*ἡ τελεία τῶν τελείων ἀεέλεστος τελειότης*).[288] The dispassionate person is 'the one who keeps his soul before the face of the Lord, always reaching out to Him even beyond his strength'.[289] Dispassion in Klimakos is closely linked with humility;[290] as we remember, it was he who suggested that the dispassionate person will conceal his dispassion by pretending to be passionate, and who cited the holy fools as examples of both humility and dispassion.[291]

In ascetical literature, dispassion is often regarded as accompanying contemplation and leading to deification. 'The one who has **(p. 251)** obtained dispassion remains in contemplation,' Origen says.[292] 'In dispassion…man becomes deified,' according to Clement of Alexandria.[293] Dispassion is identified with the kingdom of heaven,[294] 'the spiritual Sabbath'[295] and adoption by God (*υἱοθεσία*).[296] In the 'Makarian Homilies' dispassion is regarded as a fruit of love, and placed higher than the gift of healing, *gnosis*, and revelation:

> The soul which becomes engaged to the heavenly Bridegroom receives a pledge from the Spirit, which is gifts either of healing, or of knowledge, or of revelation; but she does not rest content with these, until she reaches perfect union [*κοινωνίαν*], that is, love, which is immutable and which makes the soul who desires it incapable of falling away, dispassionate and unshake-able.[297]

Ascetical and hagiographical literature provides us with some examples of how dispassion might be revealed in the concrete deeds of certain saints and righteous people. In particular, the dispassion of a monk towards women is often presented as such an example. Thus, in the *Apophthegmata* we find a story about Abba Serapion, who went to a prostitute and spent a night in her room reciting the Psalter.[298] Maximos the Confessor asserts that when a monk has reached a state of moral perfection, he will look at the bodies of women with a detached mind.[299] John Klimakos recalls one episode from a hagiographical source as an example of 'extraordinarily high degree of purity': 'A certain man, on seeing a beautiful woman, thereupon glorified the Creator, and from that one look he was moved to the love for God and to a fountain of tears.'[300] Among **(p. 252)** other examples of dispassion there is listening to secular music without being harmed by it; lovers of God, Klimakos says, are moved to gladness, tears, and divine love 'both by worldly and by spiritual songs'.[301]

Symeon is well aware of the tradition which stands behind him when writing:

> All the Scriptures and all history and the lives of saints contain testimonies concerning the fact that one who truly struggles…may attain dispassion of body and soul to such a degree that he not only remains untroubled and dispassionate when eating with women or conversing with them, but also that he suffers no harm when walking in the middle of the town, listening to singers and players of the lyre, seeing dancers and actors and laughing people.[302]

The sixth 'Ethical Discourse', from which this quotation is taken, is wholly devoted to the theme of dispassion. Here Symeon says that he has had frequent arguments with some people 'in the world' concerning *ἐμπαθείας καὶ ἀπαθείας* ('passionateness and dispassion').[303] Almost all who took part in the arguments, even those 'who gave the impression of being perfect and of possessing a great worldly reputation',[304] denied the likelihood of a man attaining such a state of impassibility 'as to speak and eat with women without being subject to any harm and without having any strife or secret defilement'.[305] It is against this common opinion that Symeon advances his theory of dispassion.

After the reference to the lives of saints, which has just been quoted, Symeon enumerates the means which one should use to reach dispassion, and then turns to the description of perfect dispassion, **(p. 253)** which shows that Symeon applies a wholly positive meaning to the term *ἀπάθεια*, regarding dispassion as one of the highest stages of spiritual progress, equal to deification:

> A man, after much pursuit [of God]…sees the One Whom he has been pursuing, and catches Him Whom he was longing for, and becomes entirely out of this world…mingles with the light, partakes of life, unites with

> immortality…ascends to the third heaven…and hears unspeakable words [cf. 2 Cor. 12: 2–4], enters the bridal chamber [cf. Matt. 9: 15]…partakes of the fatted calf [cf. Luke 15: 23], of life-giving bread [cf. John 6: 51], of the drink of life [cf. John 4: 13–14], of 'the things which the angels desire to look into' [1 Pet. 1: 12], of noetic manna [cf. Exod. 16: 4]…The soul then becomes for the body the same as God for the soul, as the voice of the Theologian said…[306] The intelligible soul [of God] then mingles with our soul, as someone said somewhere,[307] so as to save our spirit and to make our flesh immortal.[308]

This passage, full of biblical references and containing two quotations from Gregory Nazianzen, indicates, together with the passage quoted before, how Symeon enlists all possible means to prove that his teaching on dispassion is fully traditional: he draws suitable material from scriptural, hagiographical, and patristic sources.

It has already been mentioned that, for Symeon, his spiritual father Symeon the Studite was dispassion personified: in his 'Hymn 15' Symeon asserts that the Studite was so beyond passions as not to be embarrassed at seeing naked people and being seen naked.[309] Being a contemporary of both Symeon and his opponents, Symeon the Studite was regarded by his disciple as a kind of link between ancient saints and them, as well as a living proof that the ideal of dispassion was still achievable in his time:

> He possessed Christ completely, and was completely christ,
> And he always saw his own members and the members of any other person,
> Each one separately and all together, as Christ;
> He remained motionless, unhurt and dispassionate,
> Being christ himself and seeing in Christ
> All the baptized and clothed with the whole Christ.[310]

(p. 254) Even if you, while being naked, become 'frantic for the female' (*θηλυμανής*), like a donkey or a horse, it is not the case with the saints, Symeon insists.[311]

In fact, Symeon in the text quoted reflects the idea that the one who is dispassionate could look at women without passion (cf. the passage from Maximos the Confessor above). For Symeon the notion that one must perceive Christ in the human body and its members, 'each one separately and all together', was highly important: it is to be fully understood in the framework of his doctrine of the deification of man.[312] However, it might seem to be expressed here with a sharpness unusual for ascetical literature, especially if we compare Symeon's testimony about his spiritual father with what the hagiographers usually say about their heroes. Thus, Athanasios tells us how Anthony the Great and his disciple Theodore did not want to see each other naked when they had to pass the river; Anthony was even ashamed to see himself naked.[313] Another saint, Nikiphoros of Militos, never allowed anyone to touch his body or to look at it.[314] This traditional monastic fear of nakedness is totally absent in Symeon.

In his 'Chapters', Symeon treats the theme of dispassion in a more systematic manner; there he speaks, in particular, about the different levels of dispassion. We remember that Maximos the Confessor gave four definitions of *ἀπάθεια*, in which the first concerns the body, the second and the third—the soul, and the fourth—the intellect. Now Symeon also distinguishes between the *ἀπάθεια* of the body and of the soul:

> The dispassion of the soul and that of the body are different things: the first sanctifies also the body…whereas the second cannot by itself [i.e. without the first] procure any advantage for the one who possesses it.[315]

Symeon, therefore, regards the dispassion of the soul as the higher state in comparison with that of the body.

In another definition of *ἀπάθεια* which Symeon gives in his 'Chapters' he speaks of the dispassion of the intellect; this definition may serve as a summary of his doctrine on this subject:

> **(p. 255)** I hold that dispassion is not only to be beyond the practice of passions, but to be alien to the desire for them; and not only this, but also to have the intellect stripped of any thought about them, so that, whenever we want, we may become above the heavens and beyond all visible and sensible things. It is as if our senses were closed and our intellect had penetrated to the realm beyond sense-perception [*εἰς τὰ ὑπέρ αἴσθησιν ἐμβατεύοντος*], carrying the senses with it by its force, as an eagle does its own wings.[316]

Here dispassion is equated with total withdrawal from this world: it is not only the overcoming of passions, but the supra-sensible life in full participation of the divine.

6. Deification

We have come to the final point of our discussion on Symeon's doctrine in its relation to Orthodox tradition, his teaching on the deification of man.

The doctrine of the deification of man is a central point of the theology, asceticism, and mysticism of the Eastern Orthodox Church.[317] This doctrine derives from the Bible, having at the same time certain analogies in ancient Greek philosophy.[318] The most important Hellenistic element of the doctrine is its vocabulary: as I.-H. Dalmais points out, the vocabulary of this doctrine is alien to the biblical language with its emphasis on the absolute transcendence of the divine.[319] But many texts in the Gospels and apostolic writings can be cited which were later assumed by the Fathers as the basis of their doctrine of deification. In particular, Jesus Christ Himself speaks of **(p. 256)** people as 'gods', quoting Psalm 81/82: 6 (John 10: 34). In the Johannine corpus we find the ideas of our adoption (John 1:12) and likeness to God (1 John 3: 2). The Second Epistle of Peter speaks of men as 'partakers of the divine nature' (1: 4). In the Pauline epistles, we find the development of the biblical notion of the divine image and likeness in man (cf. Rom. 8: 29; 1 Cor. 15: 49; 2 Cor. 3: 18; Col. 3: 10), the idea of our participation in God's incorruptible immortality (1 Cor. 15: 53), the doctrine of our adoption by God (Gal. 3: 26; 4: 5) and the image of man as a temple of God (1 Cor. 3: 16). The eschatological vision of St. Paul is characterized by the idea of the glorious state of humankind after the resurrection, when it will be transformed and restored under Christ as its head (Rom. 8: 18–23; Eph. 1: 10), and when God will be 'all in all' (1 Cor. 15: 28).

These New Testament notions found their development in the Fathers of the second century. Ignatios calls the Christians *θεοφόροι* ('those who bear God'),[320] speaking of their union with and participation in God.[321] In Irenaeus we find the concept of 'recapitulation', the return of humankind to its primordial state through participation in Christ.[322] The following expressions of Irenaeus are of a special importance:

> [The Word of God] became what we are in order to make us what He 1s.[323] The Word [became] man, and the Son of God [became] son of man so that man...might become son of God.[324]

The assertion of man's becoming god through the Incarnation of God will be a corner-stone of the doctrine of deification of subsequent Orthodox writers.

Though the doctrine of deification was anticipated by Irenaeus, it was Clement of Alexandria in whom the terminology of deification appeared more advanced and who first used the verb *θεοποιέω* ('to divinize'): 'The Word divinizes man by His heavenly teaching'.[325] This divinization is understood by Clement as moral perfection: in **(p. 257)** his perfect state man becomes 'godlike' (*θεοειδὴς καὶ θεοείκελος*).[326] Clement looks at divinization in its eschatological perspective: 'We will become pure in heart, and there will be a restoration for the sake of eternal contemplation [of God] face to face...We will be called gods and will stand among other gods.'[327]

The doctrine of deification became fully established in patristic theology during the fourth-century polemic with Arianism. The classical formula of the deification of man is contained in Athanasios: *Αὐτὸς ἐνηνθρώπησεν ἵνα ἡμεῖς θεοποιηθωμεν* ('He became man in order that we may become gods').[328] For Athanasios, as for all the Fathers of the age of the Ecumenical Councils, the Incarnation of the Word of God is the sole basis of man's deification. Athanasios emphasizes the ontological difference between our adoption by God and deification on the one hand, and Christ's sonship and divinity on the other: in the final deification 'we become sons [of God], but not in the same manner as He is, not by nature and reality, but by the grace of Him Who called us.'[329]

The idea of deification is common to all three Cappadocians, among whom it was Gregory Nazianzen who most widely employed the terminology of deification, whereas both Basil and Gregory of Nyssa were more reserved in using non-scriptural terms.[330] Gregory Nazianzen, however, ascribes to Basil the following significant phrase: 'I am a creature but I am called to be god.'[331] Gregory himself went far beyond his predecessors in constant application of the concept of deification.[332] He uses the terms related to this concept much more widely than preceding theologians.[333] As in Irenaeus and Athanasios, in Gregory deification is linked with the Incarnation of **(p. 258)** God.[334] Gregory repeats a classical formula of deification, adding a *tantum-quantum* ('so far as') specification to it:

God becomes man *ἵνα γένομαι τοσοῦτον θεὸς ὅσον ἐκεῖνος ἄνθρωπος* ('m order that I may become god so far as He has become man').[335]

In Dionysios and Maximos the Confessor, as in Gregory, deification is understood as a gift of divine grace and as an effect of the reception of the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist.[336] Dionysios defines deification as 'likeness to God and union with Him, as far as this is possible (*ὡς ἐφικτόν*)'[337] Maximos in his concept of deification takes as his basis the Irenaeo-Athanasian formula,[338] especially emphasizing the interdependence of the deification of man and the Incarnation of God; he not only uses Gregory the logian's *tantum-quantum* formula,[339] but he also presents it in Theoreverse by putting it in the context of the notion of the two natures of Christ: in the person of Christ, God becomes man in so far as man has deified himself.[340] Maximos does not hesitate to say:

> In fact, the most perfect work of love and the end of its activity is to allow, through a reciprocal attribution, the individual characteristics [*ἰδιώματα*] of those who are bound together by it...to become mutually useful, so that man is made god, and God is called and appears as man.[341]

Both the Incarnation of God and deification of man are, therefore, understood as fruits of *συνέργεια* ('co-activity') of God and man.

In John of Damascus we find a summary of the patristic idea of deification. In his first Discourse 'Against Those Who Reject the Holy Images', which was probably known to Symeon,[342] John writes, alluding to biblical and patristic texts:

> **(p. 259)** For John the Theologian said: 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He will appear, we shall be like Him...' [1 John 3: 2]. For as iron united with light becomes light not by nature, but by union [with fire] and participation [*μεθέξει*],[343] so what is being deified [*τὸ θεούμενον*] becomes god not by nature, but by participation...Concerning the fact that the saints are gods by deification, it is said: 'God is in the assembly of gods' [Ps. 81/82: 1], [which will happen] when God will stand among gods, awarding ranks, as Gregory the Theologian said.[344]

In specifically ascetical literature, the traditional Eastern teaching on the deification of man is also present to a considerable extent. Repeating Athanasios, Mark the Monk says: 'God...became what we are, so that we might become what He is'.[345] Diadochos teaches in one of his sermons: 'What belongs to God by His body, the same belongs to those who are to become gods by the abundance of His grace, for God made people gods.'[346] The author of the 'Makarian Homilies' develops the theme of the final resurrection of all and transfiguration of the whole humanity.[347]

In the Syriac tradition, the concept of deification was developed, in particular, by Ephrem of Nisibis.[348] According to him, God has created man with the potential of being a 'created god'.[349] As man was not able to fulfil this destiny, Jesus Christ came to fulfil it: 'The Most High knew that Adam had wanted to become a god, so He sent His Son...in order to grant him his desire'.[350] Ephrem speaks of the 'exchange' between God and man, using an expression which reminds us of the Athanasian formula of deification: 'He gave us divinity, we gave Him humanity'.[351]

(p. 260) The liturgical texts of the Eastern Church are full of references to the doctrine of deification,[352] and the Athanasian formula of deification appears there in various modifications:

> Thou becamest man, O good Christ, in order to make man god.[353]
>
> Thou wert [made] man, O Lover of mankind, in order to make man god.[354]
>
> Today Christ on Mount Tabor changed the darkened nature of Adam, and filling it with the brightness He has made it godlike.[355]
>
> Thou hast transformed [the nature of Adam] into the glory and splendour of Thine own divinity.[356]
>
> 'In My Kingdom...I shall be with you as God among gods'.[357]

This shows that for an Orthodox Christian the doctrine of deification is not simply a matter of theological speculation, but rather an object of constant meditation in prayer.

Before turning to Symeon, two important characteristics of the approach of the Eastern Fathers to deification should be pointed out. The first is that deification is often perceived by them within an eschatological framework, when the Fathers speak of the final deification of man in the kingdom of heaven. Gregory Nazianzen says that in this life (*ἐντανθα*) we are being trained and prepared, whereas 'elsewhere' (*ἀλλαχου*) we will be deified by our inclination towards God.[358] Gregory understands the final deification of man as participation in the divine light in the kingdom of heaven: 'Light is the brilliance there for those who have been purified here, when "the righteous will shine forth as the sun" (Matt. 13: 43) and God will stand amongst them, gods and kings'.[359] At the same time, deification begins right here: the one who has surpassed everything earthly, Maximos says, enters the eighth day (i.e. the age to come anticipated in the present life) and 'lives the blessed life of God...becoming **(p. 261)** himself god by deification'.[360] As M. Lot-Borodine summarizes the patristic approach, deification is anticipated and begun *in via*, but is fully realized *in patriae*.[361]

The second important characteristic of the Eastern approach to deification consists in the notion that the human body takes part in it: this is one of the ideas that distinguish the patristic doctrine of *θέωσις* from its Neo-Platonic counterpart, the idea of 'being god', which we encounter in Plotinus.[362] Makarios of Egypt speaks of the final transfiguration of the bodies of the saints, which will be glorified through unspeakable light.[363] John Klimakos states that the bodies of the saints are being sanctified during their earthly life 'and in some way rendered incorruptible through the flame of purity'.[364] When the soul becomes god by participation in divine grace, Maximos the Confessor says, 'the body is deified along with the soul through its own corresponding participation in the process of deification'.[365] The saints, who are gods, kings, and masters, possessed God implanted in their bodies, John of Damascus suggests when discussing the theme of the veneration of the relics of the saints: referring to 1 Cor. 6: 19 ('your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost'), he states that the bodies of the saints become 'animated temples of God, animated houses of God'.[366]

After these necessary remarks we can return to Symeon. It is not mere chance that the very first lines of Nikitas' 'Life of Symeon' are devoted to the exposition of the doctrine of deification:

> Virtue is something fiery, which is able to...transform the soul entirely into fire, to lift up the intellect from earth and to bring it into heaven, and to make man entirely god [*θεὸν ὅλον ἀποδειξαι ἄνθρωπον*]. [Such was] this great Symeon...[367]

(p. 262) Nikitas describes his spiritual father as one who was completely deified during his earthly life:

> Being prompted by the energy of the Holy Spirit, he became day by day entirely fire, entirely light; he became god by adoption; and, as son of God, he spoke with the Father and God, like Moses, with...open face [cf. Exod. 31: 18].[368]

The central and prominent place of the doctrine of deification in Symeon the New Theologian's mystical theology may well be illustrated by the quantity of instances in his own writings where this doctrine is implied.[369] One can say that the doctrine of deification is the nucleus of the whole of Symeon's theological thought, shaping different elements of it into a coherent system. We have already seen many times how the main theological, anthropological, ecclesiological, ascetical, and mystical ideas of Symeon are to be comprehended in the context of this doctrine, which runs through the entire corpus of his writings. Let us now summarize his understanding of deification and draw a conclusion about how it corresponds to the traditional doctrine as expressed by preceding church Fathers.

Symeon repeats almost word for word the Athanasian formula of deification, when, to the question 'Why did God become man?', he answers: 'So that man may become god'.[370] According to Symeon and the tradition to which he belonged, J. Pelikan says, 'deification was the consequence and the counterpart of the Incarnation of God in Christ'.[371] This initial Christological dimension can be perceived in many instances where Symeon speaks of deification. 'God wants to make us gods from men...He wants this so much that He...descends and comes for this purpose on earth,' Symeon says.[372] 'I am God Who became man for your sake; I created you, as you see, and I will make you god,' Symeon writes, speaking in the person of Christ.[373] Like Ephrem, Symeon speaks of the 'wondrous

and new exchange' (*συνάλλαγμα*) between God and man: God received His human flesh from the Virgin Mary and gave Her His divinity instead; now He gives His flesh to the saints in order to deify them.[374] **(p. 263)** Symeon perceives this mystical exchange not only in Mary and the saints, but also in himself:

> The Word remained immutable in His divinity,
> And yet He became man by assumption of the flesh;
> In the same manner He kept me man, immutable in flesh and soul,
> And yet He made me entirely god [*πεποίηκε θεόν με ὅλον*],
> When He assumed my condemned flesh
> And clothed me in His divinity,
> For when I was baptized in Christ, I put on Christ...
> How is he not god by grace and adoption [*χάριτι καὶ θέσει*]
> Who has put on the Son of God
> In assurance, knowledge and contemplation...?
> God totally became man,
> And so you should think in the Orthodox way [*φρονεῖν ὀρθοδόξως*]
> That I become totally god by communion [*κοινωνίᾳ*] with God,
> In assurance and knowledge, and not by substance, but by participation [*οὐχὶ οὐσίᾳ, μετουσίᾳ δέ*].[375]

Therefore, the belief in the deification of man is considered by Symeon as an essential requirement for the 'Orthodox way of thinking'. Symeon follows the terminology elaborated by earlier Fathers when emphasizing that the deification of man is not by nature, but by participation in God, by grace[376] and by adoption (*θέσει*).[377] As for Dionysios and Maximos, so for Symeon the pledge of deification through Christ is Holy Baptism (the 'conscious' Baptism, as he always puts it); the worthy reception of the Eucharist is another guarantee of deification, as it was pointed out earlier.[378] Deification takes place *γνωστῶς καὶ αἰσθητῶς*, 'in assurance and knowledge', the expressions which Symeon widely uses elsewhere, in different variants and when discussing different notions.[379]

Like many earlier Fathers, Symeon speaks of the deification of the human person after death and of the final restoration and transfiguration of all creation after the second coming of Christ.[380] The eschatological dimension of the theme of the deification of man is **(p. 264)** developed, in particular, in 'Hymn 27', where Symeon describes the glory of the saints after they die:

> Not only does God repose in the saints,
> But also the saints live and move in God [cf. Acts 17: 28]...
> O marvel! Like angels and like sons of
> God Will they be after death, gods united with God:
> Those who are gods by adoption being similar to Him Who is God by nature.[381]

Elsewhere Symeon refers to the relics of the saints as a proof of their final deification: their bodies, since they were united with deified souls, are kept for many years without decomposition, being preserved for the final restoration and incorruption.[382] In this argumentation Symeon follows John of Damascus, who also claimed that the saints became gods by adoption and cited as an example the incorruption of their relics.

Although the final resurrection of human nature belongs to the age to come, the process of deification begins in this life. The anticipation of the 'eighth day', the experience of paradise and the pledge of the kingdom of heaven are given here,[383] and only those who became 'heavenly and divine' during their earthly life will enter this kingdom after death.[384] According to Symeon, deification involves both human initiative and the descent of God to man: the one who has forgotten the whole world and has been stripped of earthly things acquires initial integrity of mind; then the unique God unites with Him and, through this union, totally deifies him.[385] Symeon uses the traditional image of iron in fire, which was employed by John of Damascus in the same context (see the quotation above), to describe how this deification affects human nature: as fire gives its qualities to iron without participating in iron's blackness, so the Holy Spirit gives people His incorruptibility and immortality, transforming them into light and making them absolutely like Christ.[386] Deification is, therefore, the restoration of man's initial likeness to God, Who, according to Symeon, 'does not envy mortals when they become equal to Him by His grace...but is glad and rejoices when **(p. 265**

) He sees us, who from being human become by grace what He is by nature'.[387]

In Symeon's thought, deification is a gradual process, which presupposes a passing through different successive stages of spiritual life. In *Cat*. 14 Symeon describes how man, through observance of God's commandments, gradually attains to the state where sinful thoughts withdraw from his mind and passions diminish, at which point he obtains humility and compunction, which wash away every stain from his soul; then the Holy Spirit comes to him.[388] The more he practises God's commandments, the more he is purified, illumined, and enlightened.[389] He receives from the Spirit new eyes and new ears, by means of which he sees and hears spiritually: in this state God becomes for him all that he desires and more than he desires.[390] He always sees God and contemplates the glory of his own soul, since he is now totally enlightened and transformed.[391] Elsewhere Symeon adds, referring to Gregory Nazianzen, that the progress to deification has no end:

> Perfection is endless [*ἀτελὴς ἡ τελειότης*],
> For its beginning is its end.
> How is it the end? As Gregory
> Theologically said:
> 'Illumination is the end
> Of all who desire;
> And the divine light
> Is the termination of all contemplation'.[392]

Thus, for both Gregory Nazianzen and Symeon deification consists primarily in illumination by and participation in the divine light, which is the limit of everything desirable. As it was noticed earlier, Symeon often links two themes, namely the divine light and deification, regarding them as counterparts of each other. 'Those who repent', Symeon says, 'become sons of Your divine light; for the light engenders light, and so they become light, children of God... **(p. 266)** and gods by grace.'[393] Elsewhere Symeon appeals to his readers: 'Try...to kindle the intelligible lamp of your soul, in order to become suns shining in the world...in order to become like gods.'[394] When the divine light illumines us, we become godlike—'gods who see God'.[395] Referring to his visions of light, Symeon tells us how through them God entirely renewed him, entirely immortalized and entirely deified him, and made him Christlike.[396]

Deification through illumination by the divine light, therefore, became the experience of Symeon himself, and this is why he constantly returns to this theme. There are many instances, especially in the 'Hymns', where Symeon speaks of deification as his own personal experience, but here we shall confine ourselves to the analysis of the most characteristic one, namely that occurring in 'Hymn 15'. This text is of a special interest since it is definitely unique in Byzantine patristic literature by the power and novelty of its expression. Here Symeon speaks of the total transfiguration of man's nature, including his body and all its members:

> We become members of Christ,[397] and Christ becomes our members:
> My hand is Christ, and my foot is Christ...
> And I, miserable, am a hand of Christ and a foot of Christ.
> I move my hand, and it is the whole Christ who is my hand
> (Since we should think that the divine divinity is undivided),
> I move my foot, and behold, it shines like He Himself.
> Do not say that I am blaspheming, but rather accept this
> And venerate Christ, Who makes you such!
> For if you want, you will also become a member of Him,
> And so all members of each of us separately
> Will become members of Christ, and Christ will become our members,
> And He will make all our uncomely members to be honourable,[398]
> Having adorned them with the beauty of His divinity and glory,
> And we will together become gods...and each of our members will be the entire Christ.[399]

It has already been mentioned that the notion of the transfiguration of all the members of the human body by the divine light was very important for Symeon; now we see that this is because he **(p. 267)** understands the deification of man as such a total transfiguration of his nature that it includes all his members, even those

commonly considered as 'uncomely'. Already Maximos the Confessor asserted that the body is deified along with the soul, and now Symeon shows us how this deification happens. He does not hesitate to bring this idea to its extreme conclusion and to write down the following lines, which have embarrassed his readers through centuries:

> 'Thus, you have recognized my finger to be Christ
> And even my pudendum—did you not tremble, did you not feel shame...?
> When you said that Christ is like my uncomely member
> I suspected that you pronounced blasphemy!'
> Thus, you falsely understood me, because these [members] are not uncomely:
> [These] members of Christ are concealed, for they are covered,
> And thus, they are even more honourable than other members,
> Being hidden from all and secret members of the Secret One,
> From Whom sperm is given in divine union,
> Divine sperm which is fearfully formed in divine form,
> Issued from the entire divinity, for it is entire God
> Who is united with us, O fearful mystery!
> And then the truly unspeakable and divine marriage takes place:
> [God] mixes Himself with each of us...and each of us is united with the Lord.[400]

Symeon speaks here of the Incarnation of God, which he elsewhere also calls the 'mystical marriage' of God with humankind.[401] Through His Incarnation God deified the human body; so he who is ashamed of his body, is ashamed of God Himself.[402] One anonymous copyist of the thirteenth century supplied the passage just quoted with a scholium, in which he refers to 1 Cor. 6: 15 ('Shall I take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot?') and notes that man is not united with a prostitute through 'any other member' except the one mentioned by Symeon.[403] When referring to St. Paul, the scholiast probably wanted to demonstrate Symeon's **(p. 268)** Orthodoxy, but not all subsequent editors of Symeon were convinced by his argumentation: some of them preferred to omit the ambivalent passages[404] or even to exclude the whole of 'Hymn 15' from their editions.[405]

In fact, the scholiast was quite right when endeavouring to show that even such an extraordinarily original text of Symeon as his 'Hymn 15' has a traditional background. Symeon does derive his teaching from the words 'Your bodies are members of Christ' (1 Cor. 6: 15), constructing the whole of his theory upon the foundation of this Pauline notion. He also follows the teaching of Maximos the Confessor and John of Damascus on the participation of the body in deification. The originality of Symeon's approach consists in his usual method of bringing traditional notions to their ultimate and extreme outcomes. Thus, not being satisfied with what he said concerning male bodily members, Symeon insists that Christ deified also female ones:

> You say: 'Is it not a shame...to bring Christ down to uncomely members?'
> But I tell you again: 'Perceive Christ in the womb,
> And think about what is in the womb and about Him Who came out from it,
> And about through what my God passed when coming out.[406]

The theme of the Virgin's womb and Christ passing through it was traditional for Byzantine church hymnography.[407] And yet, it is understandable that 'Hymn 15' as a whole might well have shocked Symeon's contemporaries, especially monks, who were certainly not used to such realism of description. It is clear, however, that Symeon's intention was not to introduce any new idea, but to develop the traditional concept of deification of man, including his body, and to highlight the point that deification is not an abstract theory, but a reality which takes place in the experience of the humankind and in his own experience.

(p. 269) The notion of the deification of man is the climax of Symeon's theology, anthropology, and mysticism. This section can be concluded with the following passage, in which Symeon's major theological and anthropological notions are joined with the doctrine of deification and are placed in a triadological context, so that it constitutes to some extent a summary of the whole of Symeon's doctrine:

> God is light, and to those who have entered into union with Him He imparts of His own brightness to the extent that they have been purified...O marvel! Man is united to God spiritually and physically...Through

> essential unity he also has three hypostases by grace, being a single god by adoption, with body and soul and the divine Spirit, of Whom he has become a partaker. Then is fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet David: 'I said: you are gods, and you are all the sons of the Most High' [Ps. 81/82: 6], that is, sons of the Most High according to His image and likeness.[408]

The following conclusions might be made from our investigation into the connection between Symeon and the patristic tradition of the Orthodox East:

1. Symeon had a good knowledge of the theological, ascetical, and mystical literature of the Eastern Church, though he rarely quoted preceding church Fathers directly. Among his favourite writers Gregory Nazianzen occupies first place, whereas in ascetical matters he often follows John Klimakos.
2. Symeon showed a high respect for hagiographical literature, regarding it primarily as a source of inspiration for his contemporaries. He considered the lives of the ancient saints as reflecting the living experience of the Orthodox faith and insisted that this experience had not been discontinued in his own time.
3. In his triadological polemic Symeon anticipated the controversies of the 1160s, speaking out against all kinds of rationalism in trinitarian theology. Symeon's language and terminology, especially in his major theological works, is traditional and exact.
4. In his teaching on God in Himself and in His attitude to humankind Symeon is close to Gregory Nazianzen, particu larly inthe treatment of the themes of the 'true theologian', of the incomprehensibility of God, of the divine names, and of God as light. The treatment of the theme of the divine names and especially Symeon's wide use of apophatic terminology shows his certain closeness to the **(p. 270)** Areopagitic tradition, though the literary dependence of Symeon upon Dionysios can hardly be established.
5. Symeon's anthropology is a good example of how deeply his thought is rooted in patristic tradition. He adopts all the major anthropological notions reflected in the Fathers, particularly in Maximos the Confessor, including those based on Greek philosophy.
6. When discussing ecclesiological themes, Symeon primarily relies on the teaching concerning the Church as formulated by the Fathers of the first centuries. Symeon had a high opinion of the hierarchical principle in the Church, while criticizing the clergy of his time for deviation from traditional ideals. Symeon highly valued the sacraments of the Church, in particular Baptism and the Eucharist, as sources of the salvation and deification of human nature, but he always insisted on the conscious character of their reception.
7. If Symeon's asceticism may be regarded as based upon the tradition of John Klimakos, his mysticism constitutes the most original part of his literary heritage and has only a few traces of literary dependence upon preceding Fathers. One may, however, discern fundamental affinities between Symeon's mysticism and the mystical theology of Gregory Nazianzen, Makarios of Egypt, Isaac the Syrian, and Maximos the Confessor. On the contrary, the mysticism of Gregory of Nyssa and Dionysios the Areopagite with their symbolism of darkness does not seem to have deeply affected Symeon's thought.
8. Unlike the majority of church writers, Symeon does not hesitate to speak openly of his own personal mystical experience, the latter being extraordinary even in comparison with the great Fathersof the past. Symeon's radiant personality was especially reflected in his discussion of the themes of the vision of God as light, ecstasy, dispassion, and the deification of man. Even when describing his own mystical journey, Symeon always placed it in the context of Orthodox tradition, regarding his own experience as a part of the experience of the Church and insisting upon his faithfulness to the Orthodox Church.

Notes:

(1) The limits of this study do not allow us to discuss Symeon's asceticism in a more substantial way (apart from the observations made in chapter 4). As far as the connection between Symeon's asceticism and the Eastern tradition in general is concerned, the comprehensive study by W. Völker covers this field to a significant degree. The German scholar has demonstrated many parallels between Symeon and preceding writers, in particular John Klimakos and Isaac the Syrian: see *Praxis, passim*. Symeon as an ascetical writer was certainly influenced by Klimakos, though this influence was not a personal one, in the sense that we can speak of Symeon the Studite's influence on Symeon the younger. The 'Ladder' by John Klimakos is a synthesis of centuries-old ascetical practice, upon which it is totally based. Klimakos expressed not so much his personal ideas as accumulated traditional ones, having produced a kind of monastic handbook intended for practical use: this is the reason why his book obtained such popularity in

monastic circles. Therefore, we should speak of the influence of monastic tradition on Symeon through Klimakos rather than of Symeon's special devotion to Klimakos.

(2) For an analysis of the patristic teaching on tears and repentance see Hausherr, *Penthos*. Cf. Gillet, 'Tears'; Lot-Borodine, 'Larmes'. Some aspects of Symeon's teachingon tears are outlined in Sylvia Mary, 'Tears'.

(3) *Cat*. 27. 79.

(4) *Cat*. 29. 245.

(5) *Cat*. 5. 26–7. Cf. *Cat*. 28. 274–5; *Hymn* 8. 28.

(6) *Cat*. 5. 123.

(7) *Cat*. 4. 663–5. Symeon repeats Mark the Monk, *Penit*. [981 C–984 B].

(8) *Cat*. 5. 15–16.

(9) One of Symeon's very rare precise references to a patristic writing, which is, however, hardly identifiable: see Krivochéine, *SC* 96. 387 (nn. 1 and 2).

(10) *Cat*. 5. 122–35. Does Symeon not imply himself and his first vision of light, which actually took place when he was still a rich courtier, had responsibility for a large household and was involved in 'worldly affairs'?

(11) *Cat*. 29. 205–11; quotation from Gregory's *Disc*. 19. 7 [1049 D–1052 A].

(12) *Hom*. 85 [342–3] = *Syr*. *Hom*. 35 [253].

(13) The copyist of the 14th-century *Coisl*. 268, to which reference was made earlier, indicated some parallels of that kind. See, for example, fol. 45, where the copyist added the following marginal note: 'Symeon [also said] that without tears all the labour of a monk is useless', to the passage from the *Discourse* 12 by Isaac 'Concerning Hesychasts' (*Hom*. 15= *Syr*. *Horn*. 14), which is devoted to repentance and tears ('When you attain to the region of tears, know that your mind has left the prison of this world...').

(14) Gregory of Nyssa, *Ephrem* [829 D]. The authorship of this encomium is disputed: see Quasten, *Patrology* III. 279; *Clavis* II. 224.

(15) *Cat*. 30. 147–75 (abbreviated).

(16) *Cat*. 30. 139–42. The reference is to *Ladder* 5 [764 B–781 A].

(17) *Ladder* 5 [765 A–C].

(18) Cf. also Symeon's comparison between the sinner who repents and the sick personwho feels terrible pain in his heart: *Cat*. 23. 8 ff.

(19) *Ladder* 7 [812 A]. For 'joy-making mourning' in Klimakos see Chryssavgis, *Ascent*, 147–50. For Klimakos' teaching on tears in general see Völker, *Scala*, 154–87.

(20) Cf. *Cap*. 3. 11.

(21) *Cat*. 23. 95–107; 154–7.

(22) 'Ivresse', 368. Krivochéine mentions Philo, Plotinus, Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, Eusebios of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, and Makarios of Egypt among Eastern authors in whom this theme occurs: ibid. 368–9. For the full discussion of the topic see Lewy, *Ebrietas*, 73–164.

(23) Cf. Krivochéine, 'Ivresse', 374.

(24) *Hom. Col.* 12 [303].

(25) *Letter* 1. 220 [164 AB]. The image of honey, used also by Klimakos, underscores the idea of sweetness, as the image of wine in Symeon.

(26) *Hom.* 85 [338] = *Syr. Hom.* 35 [245–6]. The image of oil plays here the same rôle as the images of wine and honey in the passages quoted above.

(27) Cf. the expression 'sweet tears' in *Syr. Hom.* 22 [165] and 35 [229]. For a fuller treatment of this and other ascetical and mystical themes of Isaac the Syrian see Alfeyev, *Isaac.*

(28) *Cat.* 1. 178–81.

(29) *Cap.*3. 23.

(30) *Cat.* 18. 288–90.

(31) *Hom.* 85 [348] = *Syr. Hom.* 35 [261].

(32) *Cat.* 8. 42–55. Cf. *Cat.* 18. 290–3.

(33) See *Cat.* 19. 62 ff.

(34) *Cat.* 31.65–6.

(35) *Cat.* 23. 35–45.

(36) *Hom.* 81 [306] = *Syr. Hom.* 74 [507]. In this text of Isaac the Syrian the idea of compassion and mercy dominates, whereas in Symeon's *Cat.* 23. 35 ff. the motif of self-humiliation takes the most prominent place; however, it is clear that both authors speak of the same spiritual condition, which is caused by many tears.

(37) *Eth.* 10. 822–8.

(38) *Hom.* 85 [342]= *Syr. Hom.* 35 [253]. Cf. *Hom.* 30 [130] = *Syr. Hom.* 2 [16]: those who are filled with divine light weep day and night.

(39) *Vision*, 25.

(40) Cf. also Exod. 19: 21; Judg. 6: 22; 13: 22; Isa. 6: 5, etc.

(41) Cf. 1 John 4: 12; 6:46.

(42) More texts in Lossky, *Vision*, 27–31.

(43) *Beat.* 6 [137–8].

(44) On this notion see above, in the section on the incomprehensibility of God.

(45) *Beat.* 6 [141]. (It might be argued that Gregory speaks here about created actions of God rather than His uncreated energies).

(46) *Hom. John* 15 [98]. Cf. similar explanation of John 1: 18 in *Incomprehens.* 4. 159–87 [244].

(47) *Polyc.* 3. 2 [148].

(48) *Her.* 4. 6. 6 [451].

(49) *Avian.* 4 [524 C].

(50) *Hom. John* 15 [98]. Cf. Origen, *Princ.* 1. 2. 6 [36]; 2. 6. 3 [141].

(51) *Iamb.* 33 [181]. Cf. the interpretation of John 1:18 by Eusebios of Caesarea, *Eccl. Theol.* 1. 20 [83]: 'While the invisible God did not reveal [Himself] (*οὐκ ἐξηγήσατο*), the Only-begotten Son…accomplished a revelation [of God] to people.'

(52) *Hom.* 73 [285] = *Syr. Hom.* 45 [324].

(53) *Gr. Cat.* 1. 12.

(54) *Gr. Cat.* 1.33.

(55) *Autol.* 1. 2 [60].

(56) *Beat.* 6 [142]. It is noteworthy that Gregory, unlike Chrysostom, does not apply the vision of God to the future life.

(57) Isaac, *Hom.* 43 [177].

(58) *Hymn* 45. 80–4.

(59) *Hymn* 34. 83–93.

(60) Note the difference between this assertion of Symeon and the interpretation of John 1:18 by John Chrysostom. The latter suggests that the word ἐξηγήσατο ('he has revealed') 'indicates the clearer and more evident teaching which [Christ] gave': *Hom. John* 15 [100]. Chrysostom equates the 'revelation' with the teaching of Christ, as well as the 'vision of God' with knowledge of His existence. Any kind of 'vision of the divinity' is, therefore, rejected. Earlier (in Chapter 2) a similar difference between Symeon and Chrysostom in their understanding of Matt. 5: 8 was observed. It is obvious that the theme of vision of God was treated by both authors in quite a different way.

(61) *Eth.* 5. 88–109.

(62) The opponents of Symeon deny the interpretation of John 1:18 according to which the Son revealed (ἐξηγήσατο) the invisible Father to people. Instead, they understand the verse in the sense that 'the Only-begotten Son explained (ἐξηγήσατο) that no one has ever seen God.' Cf. John Chrysostom, *Hom. John* 15 [100]: 'What have we learned from the Son…? That it is impossible to see God and that nobody knows Him except the Son.'

(63) The *SC* indices point out about forty-five instances when the verse is quoted or alluded to by Symeon. Although the majority of these allusions do not imply the whole idea of 1 Tim. 6: 16 but only certain terms used by Paul (especially, *φωῦ ἀπρόσιτον*, 'the light unapproachable'), nevertheless the constant presence of the verse in Symeon's mind is noteworthy.

(64) *Cat.* 14. 117–81.

(65) *Hymn* 1. 21–4.

(66) *Eth.*4. 856–60.

(67) Cf. *Hymn* 31. 116; 34. 18; 35. 66.

(68) *Hymn* 7. 25–6.

(69) Cf., for example, numerous instances in *Hymns* indicated in *SC* 196. 387–9 (φωῦς) and 376–7 (πυῦρ). See also the section on the divine light below.

(70) Cf.*Hymn* 14. 111; 16.20.

(71) Cf. *Hymn* 31. 49; 45. 82.

(72) Cf. *Hymn* 24. 6; 25. 1.

(73) Cf. *Hymn* 9. 5; 49. 18.

(74) Cf. *Hymn* 15. 2; 48. 111; 49. 23; 55. 14.

(75) Cf. *Hymn* 49. 29.

(76) The teaching of the 'beatific vision' was precisely formulated in the West after Symeon's lifetime, namely by Thomas Aquinas: see Malevez, 'Essence' in *DSp* 4, 1335–40. This teaching became known in the East much later than it had appeared in the West, and was questioned during the Palamite controversy of the 14th century: see Halleux, 'Palamisme', 411–14. B. Fraigneau-Julien shows that Symeon was not consistentin the development of the notion of the total invisibility of divine essence; side by side with the affirmations which exclude the vision of divine essence, there are some declarations in Symeon that suggest its possibility: see *Sens*, 162–3. Earlier allusionwas made to B. Krivochéine's opinion that Symeon, though being inconsistent in terminology, generally adheres to the traditional Eastern division between God's invisible essence and visible energies: see 'Essence', 168–70; *Light*, 194–8.

(77) *Hymn* 52. 50–3.

(78) *Hymn* 20. 1–3.

(79) *Hymn* 34. 1–5.

(80) *Hymn* 17. 249–69.

(81) For more references, as well as for the exposition of the theme of Christ in Symeon, see Krivochéine, *Light*, 239–58.

(82) *Hymn* 11. 35–9, 75–8.

(83) *Hymn* 11. 50–3. Cf. *Eth*. 3. 362–4, where Symeon states that the one who has seen the Son has seen the Father as well, and he who has seen the Holy Spirit has seen the Son also.

(84) Cf. *Eth*. 8. 99–123.

(85) *Hymn* 12. 23 ff.

(86) *Hymn* 24. 248–53.

(87) *Poes. hist*. 11. 4 [1512 A]. Cf. the patristic notion of the vision of the trinitarian light (see the discussion in the next section of this chapter).

(88) *Eth*. 10. 701.

(89) *Eth*. 10. 817–21.

(90) Cf. Maximos the Confessor, *Love* 4. 72 [226]: 'They [the pure in heart] will see God...as soon as they purify themselves through love and self-mastery; and the more intensely they strive, the fuller will their vision be.' Therefore, according to Maximos, the promise of Christ is being realized gradually in this life, rather than in the future.

(91) *Eth*. 5. 112–24.

(92) Cf. Krivochéine, *Light*, 32.

(93) The term φῶς ('light'), for example, appears in 54 of the 58 'Hymns' by Symeon, in 2 of the 3 *Theol*, in the majority of *Eth*. and *Cat*. The verb ὁράω ('to see') is used in Symeon's *Theol*. and *Eth*. even more frequently than the

term 'light', according to J. Darrouzes' statistics: see *SC* 129. 515. Other terms connected with the vision of light (*φωτίζω, φωτσμός, ἐλλάμπω, ἐλλαμψις, θέα, θεάομαι, ὁραις*, etc.) are also widely employed. As A. Krumbacher noticed, the terms connected with vision and light are especially characteristic of Studite literature: *Geschichte,* 677 (n. 4). Even taking into account the traditional background of this terminology, one can affirm that Symeon's extensive usage of it is extraordinary.

(94) Cf. Veniamin, *Transfiguration*, 239 and 249 (the author expresses his surprise that Symeon refers to the Transfiguration only briefly and in passing). In this there is a contrast between him and later Hesychasts, such as Gregory of Sinai and Gregory Palamas, who expressed their theory of vision of divine light in homilies 'On the Transfiguration'. Cf. also Gregory Nazianzen, who speaks of the divine light in his homilies 'On Baptism' (*Disc.* 40) and 'On Easter' (*Disc.* 45); cf. the homilies 'On the Transfiguration' by Andrew of Crete and John of Damascus.

(95) On the Evagrian notion of the vision of light by the intellect see Guillaumont, 'Vision'; idem, *Origines*, 145–7; Bunge, *Geistgebet*, 62–73.

(96) Here and below some Syriac terms are cited for those Evagrian texts which are preserved only in the Syriac version.

(97) *Antirr.* vi. 16 [525].

(98) *Thoughts*, XLII [55].

(99) Cf. *Gnost. Chapt.* 1. 35 [33].

(100) *Gnost.* 45 [178], where Evagrios refers to Basil the Great; cf. *Pract.* 64 [648–9]. Cf. also *Prayer* 74 [1184 B]: the light which acts in the intellect.

(101) *Skemm.* 2 [374].

(102) *Gnost. Chapt.* 5. 15 [183].

(103) *Thoughts*, XLIII [55].

(104) Ibid. XXXIX [55].

(105) *Ps.-Suppl* 50 [462–4].

(106) *Skemm.* 25 [377].

(107) Ibid. 4 [374].

(108) Ibid. 27 [377].

(109) *Gnost. Chapt.* 53 [464–5].

(110) *Thoughts*, XLII [55].

(111) *Gnost. Chapt.* 2. 29 [73].

(112) Cf. *Skemm.* 2 [374]: *Θεοῦ γὰρ χρεία συνεργοῦντος.*

(113) *Hom.* 1. 2 [2]. Cf. also *Hom*, (III) 22. 3. 1–2 [258–60].

(114) *Hom.* 8. 3 [78–9]. The concept of the interior light of heart is close to the Evagrian notion of the light of the intellect.

(115) *Hom.* 4. 11 [36].

(116) *Hom*, (III) 26. 6. 36 [308].

(117) *Hom*, (III) 16. 8. 14 [206]. Cf. Clement of Rome, *Cor*. 36. 2 [160]; 59. 3 [194].

(118) *Hom*, (III) 15. 1. 14–15 [172].

(119) *Love* 1. 10 [52].

(120) Ibid. 1. 97 [86].

(121) Ibid. 2. 6 [92].

(122) Ibid. 2. 48 [116].

(123) *Quest*. 80. 68–70 [62]. This is the Evagrian concept of the mingling between the intellect and the divine light.

(124) The analysis of those Syriac writings which were definitely unknown in the Greek-speaking world of the Byzantine epoch, in particular, the writings by Joseph Hazzaya and John of Dalyatha (except four homilies by the latter under the name of Isaac), falls beyond the scope of the present study. I would wish to point out, however, that the doctrine of the vision of the divine light as expressed by Symeon the New Theologian is very close to similar doctrines of Joseph Hazzaya and especially of John of Dalyatha: for the scholarly exposition of the latter see Beulay, *Enseignement*, 386–464 (with reference to other Syriac writers). In this section I shall indicate a few parallels, without providing a whole list of corresponding points.

(125) Cf. *Syr*. *Hom*. 68 [474].

(126) Cf. ibid. 22 [174].

(127) Cf. ibid. 53 [379]; 80 [557].

(128) Cf. ibid. 69 [482]; 80 [560].

(129) Cf. ibid. 13 [124–5]; 45 [326].

(130) Cf. ibid. 1 [6].

(131) *Hom*. 43 [177]. Cf. Isaac, *Hom*. 32 [140] = *Syr*. *Hom*. 22 [174]. Cf. the notion of the vision of the trinitarian light in John of Dalyatha's *Letter* 5. 2 [320–1]: 'to see the resplendence of the beauty of the Holy Trinity'. Cf. ibid. 27. 1 [386–9]: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as one lamp. Cf. Joseph Hazzaya, *Monast*. 98 [372–3].

(132) 'Greek Isaac', *Hom*. 43 [179].

(133) Ibid. [178].

(134) Ibid. [177].

(135) Ibid.

(136) Cf. ibid. [176–7]: 'The soul of a good person shines brighter than the sun.' Cf. also John of Dalyatha, *Letter* 40. 3 [432–3]: '[A monk] saw the splendour of his soul, which was made…similar to that of God.'

(137) *Hom*. 43 [177–8].

(138) *Ladder* 19 [937 C].

(139) *Ladder* 27 [1109 BD]. This vision of an angel must be distinguished from the visions of divine light in Evagrios, Makarios, Maximos, Isaac, and Symeon: in these authors the light is not an angel but God Himself, as Symeon emphasizes (see below). Cf. the remark of Gregory Palamas in the *Triads* 2. 3. 10 [546]: 'the Hesychasts have never

claimed that this light was an angel...'

(140) *Theod*. 171 [168]; cf. ibid. 175 [168–9]: the light of Christ.

(141) *Chapt*. 40 [108]. Another important theme of Diadochos is warning against false visions of light: see ibid. 40 [108]; 36 [105]. (This is a theme which is not characteristic for Symeon, but which does occur in Symeon the Studite, *Asc*. 30). In general, the term 'light' occurs very frequently in Diadochos: see *SC* 5–bis, 203.

(142) Athanasios of Alexandria, *L. Anth*. 10. 1 [162].

(143) Rufinus, *Hist. Mon*. 10. 8. 11–12 [324–5].

(144) See *Menaion*, 468–503.

(145) *Cat*. 16. 78 ff. This text will be analysed in the next section.

(146) *Euch*. 1. 87–113; described also in *Cat*. 22. 88 ff.

(147) *Euch*. 1. 135–7. This vision is to be identified with the one described in *Cat*. 16. 78 ff., since they have much in common; in particular, both took place when Symeon was already a novice and disciple of Symeon the Studite.

(148) *Euch*. 1. 172–80.

(149) Cf. *Euch*. 2. 141 ('to see the light of Your face'). Cf. John of Dalyatha, *Letter* 11. 3 [332]: 'Christ will show us the beauty of His face.'

(150) See *Hymn* II. 88–94.

(151) See, for example, Evagrios, *Gnost*. 28 [134–42]; Makarios of Egypt, *Hom*. 54 [38–41]; Diadochos, *Chapt*. 87 [146–7]; Isaac, *Hom*. 46 [287] = *Syr. Hom*. 39 [302]; Maximos the Confessor, *Love* 4. 96 [237]. Cf. Hausherr, 'Nuits'.

(152) *Euch*. 2. 137–46.

(153) Cf. *Hymn* 17. 238 ff.: 'It is not anything belonging to the world, nor a creature; for it is uncreated and beyond all creatures...'

(154) *Hymn* 45. 6.

(155) Cf. *Hymn* 12. 19–23: 'The three of Them are light: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit...The three are seen to me as in one countenance...'; cf. *Hymn* 1. 226; 2. 86–94; 21. 147; 24. 248 ff., 25. 33–48; 33. 1 ff.

(156) Cf. *Hymn* 44. 114: 'The Spirit shines in the light'; cf. *Hymn* 17. 36; 22. 177.

(157) Cf. *Hymn* 51. 15 ff.: 'Little by little You shone upon me Your divine light...O Christ, my God'; cf. *Hymn* 25. 145–51; *Eth*. 4. 263.

(158) In this Symeon's visions of Christ might be compared with Paul's vision as recounted in Acts 9: 3–4. In the case of Paul's vision, the light and the voice of Christ appeared at the same time. Symeon, when describing his first visions of light in *Euch*. 1, emphasizes that he was not immediately granted to hear the voice of Christ: see *Euch*. 1. 159–61; it is only later that Symeon heard Christ speaking to him: see *Euch*. 2. 225 ff.

(159) But he does speak of the vision of light which took place after he venerated an icon of the Holy Virgin: see *Euch*. 1. 255 ff.

(160) *Cat*. 22. 102–4.

(161) *Hymn* 38. 64; cf. *Hymn* 51. 141; *Eth*. 11. 176.

(162) *Hymn* 13. 41–2.

(163) *Eth*. 11. 174–7.

(164) It has already been mentioned (see chapter 7, the section on 'God as light') that the 'darkness' symbolism is almost totally absent in Symeon. This is why we are not inclined to regard Gregory of Nyssa and Dionysios the Areopagite as direct predecessorsof Symeon.

(165) Cf. *Hymn* 33. 64 (*φῶς νοερόν); 16. 2; 23. 222 (φώς νοητόν*).

(166) Symeon often uses the terms *διάνοια* (mind) and *καρδία* (heart) as synonyms of *νοῦς*, when speaking of the mystical vision of light. Both terms are of biblical origin and occur in the Septuagint, being also widely used in Christian ascetical literature. In particular, *καρδία* is one of the key anthropological terms in 'Makarian Homilies'. The term *νούς* derives from ancient Greek philosophical anthropology and is also used by Christian authors from St. Paul onwards.

(167) Cf. *Hymn* 34. 79; 40. 11 (in both cases the light shines in the intellect and the heart).

(168) Cf. *Hymn* 11. 42; 17. 338; 18. 82; 20. 236.

(169) Cf. *Hymn* 30. 579.

(170) Cf. *Hymn* 9. 33; 48. 23.

(171) Cf. *Hymn* 38. 83.

(172) *Hymn* 11. 46.

(173) *Hymn* 38. 86.

(174) *Hymn* 32. 82.

(175) *Hymn* 22. 108.

(176) *Eth*. 10. 673–4.

(177) *Hymn* 38. 84.

(178) *Hymn* 15. 52–3.

(179) *Eth*. 4. 862–7.

(180) *Hymn* 44. 349–75. Cf. a similar notion, with use of the language of 'immersing', in John of Dalyatha: 'The soul sees the light which shines in it and transforms it into the likeness [of the light]...The soul is united with the formless light, which is the light of the Holy Trinity that shines in its creature. The soul is plunged into the waves of the beauty [of this light] and remains in wonder for a long time...It [remains] in the cloud of the light'; *Hom*. 8 [*Vatic. syr*. 124. 296a–297b] quoted in Beulay, *Enseignement*, 388–9. The expression 'the cloud of light' (φωτὸςνεφέλη) occurs also in Symeon: see *Hymn* 17. 326.

(181) *Hymn* 50. 238–46.

(182) *Cat*. 22. 98.

(183) *Hymn* 16. 24–37. Cf. John of Dalyatha, *Letter* 27. 1–2 [388–9]: 'I see [the Trinity] like one single light, and I myself shine like it. I marvel about myself and rejoice spiritually, for the Source of life is in me.'

(184) *Hymn* 42. 85.

(185) *Hymn* 7. 4.

(186) *Hymn* 23. 124.

(187) *Hymn* 29. 225; 49. 75.

(188) *Hymn* 8. 54.

(189) *Hymn* 1. 143.

(190) *Hymn* 15. 94; 18. 17; 45. 38.

(191) *Hymn* 23. 237.

(192) *Hymn* 1. 39; 17. 387.

(193) *Hymn* 12. 59; 15. 49; 29. 225.

(194) *Hymn* 49. 75.

(195) *Hymn* 11. 41.

(196) Cf. *Hymn* 29. 9; *Eth*. 4. 769–76. Cf. chapter 4.

(197) Cf. the term ἄοτρον (star) in *Hymn* 18. 18; 22. 5; 22. 14; 42. 85; 45. 38; the term φωστήρ (star, lamp) in *Hymn* 17. 386; 49. 74–7.

(198) *Hymn* 23. 148; 42. 87.

(199) *Hymn* 2. 18; 22. 11.

(200) *Hymn* 20. 205; 29. 221.

(201) *Hymn* 17. 344–54; 22. 8.

(202) *Hymn* 45. 92.

(203) *Hymn* 1. 15.

(204) *Hymn* 17. 326.

(205) *Hymn* 28. 183.

(206) Cf. *Cap*. 3. 57. Cf. also *Euch*. 2. 150 ff.

(207) *Eth*. 8. 72–84. Cf. Ephrem the Syrian, *Opera* 11. 266 ('Greek Ephrem').

(208) *Hymn* 42. 85–7. Cf. *Hymn* 17. 325 ff.; 22. 5–9.

(209) *Hymn* 51. 35–8. Cf. the image of 'the star with a great radiance' in Joseph Hazzaya, *Monast*. 98 [372–3].

(210) *Eth*. 7. 509–37.

(211) *Eth*. 7. 548–57.

(212) Cf. *Hom*. 11. 1 ff. [96 ff.].

(213) Cf. *Hom*. 7. 5 [74]. One of the most characteristic expressions of Makarios, which emphasizes a conscious character of a mystical experience: cf. similar expressions (with use of *αἴσθησις*) in *Hom*. 10. 2; 14. 2; 37. 7; 47. 11.

Symeon also widely used these Makarian expressions, which might have evoked certain Messalian resonances: cf. Krivochéine, *SC* 96. 151 ff. There are in fact several ascetical and mystical terms which are characteristic of both Makarios and the Messalians. In particular, Makarios repeatedly employs the terms related to spiritual experience, such as *πληροφορία* and *πληροφορέω, αἴσθησις* and *αἰσθάνμαι, πεῖρα, γνῶσις*, etc., while the same terms are used by the Messalians. However, as C. Stewart recently proved (see *Working*), all these terms are common to the Greek Christian ascetical tradition as a whole, and so it is not surprising that we find them in Makarios. For the most recent and by far the most detailed discussion of the possible Messalian background of Makarios and Symeon see Hatzopoulos, *Two Outstanding Cases* (the author objects to the idea that there were direct links between these two authors and the Messalians).

(214) *Hom*. 25. 9 [204].

(215) *Hom*. 5. 7–12 [59–63].

(216) *Hom*. 25. 9–10 [204–5].

(217) *Hymn* 24. 20.

(218) *Hymn* 55. 86; cf. *Hymn* 17. 373 and *Euch*. 1. 136–7.

(219) *Hymn* 1. 39–40.

(220) *Hymn* 2. 8.

(221) *Hymn* 8. 37; 18. 84; 20. 239; 30. 198; 47. 52.

(222) *Hymn* 30. 590.

(223) *Hymn* 30. 81.

(224) *Hymn* 28. 157; 30. 1; 30. 11 ff.

(225) *Hymn* 1. 34.

(226) *Hymn* 30. 18–24.

(227) *Hymn* 1. 40; 18. 215; 20. 238.

(228) *Hymn* 25. 33–4.

(229) *Hymn* 33. 130–3.

(230) It does not have there any technical meaning and refers to deep sleep (Gen. 2: 21: sleep of Adam), horror connected with divine vision (Gen. 15: 12; Dan. 10: 7), horror in general (Ezek. 16: 16; 27: 35; 32: 10), fear of God (1 Sam. 11: 7), haste (Ps. 30/31: 22), madness (Deut. 28: 28).

(231) *Pract*. 14 [532–4]; cf. Origen, *Cels*. 3. 24 [220]; ibid. 4. 19 [289]; cf. *Apophthegmata*, Anthony 37 [88 B].

(232) See *Asc*. 30, and chapter 4 of this study.

(233) For ecstasy in non-Christian religions and the Old Testament see 'Extase' in *DSp* 4, 2045–83.

(234) Cf. Guillaumont, *Origines*, 138–44.

(235) Athanasios of Alexandria, *L. Anth*. 82. 4 [344–6].

(236) Ibid. 65. 2 [304].

(237) See *Apophthegmata*, Vissarion 4 [140 B].

(238) *Apophthegmata*, Silouanos 2 [408 CD]; 3 [409 A]; 12 [412 C].

(239) *Apophthegmata*, Poimin 144 [357 B].

(240) Palladios, *Laus. Hist*. 1 [18].

(241) See *L. Sym. Styl*. 57. 28 [51]; 71. 9 [61]; 103. 1 [80]; 123. 32 [104]; 134. 1 [126]; 186. 25 [165]; 210. 1 [180].

(242) Ibid. 129. 63 ff.[118 ff.].

(243) Ibid. 13. 3 [12].

(244) Ibid. 129. 3 [116].

(245) Ibid. 243. 8 [217].

(246) Ibid. 14. 29 [13]; 144. 25 [132]; 171. 38 [154]; 237. 24 [214]. These instances, as well as Acts 2: 4, show that ecstasy might be a mass phenomenon.

(247) See Daniélou, 'Mystique' in *DSp* 2, 1872–85; idem, *Platonisme*, 274–326 (the concept of 'ecstatic love' in Gregory).

(248) See Roques, 'Ténèbre' in *DSp* 2, 1885–1911.

(249) *Love* 1. 12 [54].

(250) Ibid. 1. 11 [52].

(251) ibid. 2. 59 [56]; cf. *Theol. Chapt*. 1. 81 [116 B]: the mind transcends itself and settles in a silence beyond all thoughts; ibid. 2. 59 [1149 C]: a man is snatched up to mystical contemplation.

(252) Sherwood, *Ambigua*, 153. For Maximos' doctrine of ecstasy see ibid. 124–54; Völker, *Maximus*, 351–65; Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 448–51.

(253) *Ladder* 23 [969 A].

(254) *Ladder* 26 [1065 A]. Cf. ibid. 6 [796 C].

(255) *Sh. Cat*. 47.

(256) *Hom*. 8. 1–3 [76–9].

(257) Cf. Brock, 'Isaac', 83 ff.

(258) Cf. *Syr. Hom*. 5 [73], 17 [139], 22 [166], etc. On the Syriac terminology of ecstasy (in particular, on that of John of Dalyatha) see Beulay, *Enseignement*, 397 ff.

(259) *Hom*. 23 [102]=*Syr. Hom*. 4 [58].

(260) Ibid. [103]=*Syr. Hom*. 4 [59]. Cf. the expression 'intellectual drunkenness' related to ecstasy in *Hom*. 32 [140]=*Syr. Hom*. 22 [174].

(261) Cf. Athanasios of Alexandria, *L. Anth*. 65. 2 (see the quotation above).

(262) *Hom*. 85 [348]=*Syr.Hom*. 35 [261].

(263) *Hom*. 32 [140] = *Syr. Hom*. 22 [174]. (The Syriac text gives a slightly different version of both sayings.) Cf. Evagrios, *Skemm*. 27 and 4 (see the full quotations above, in the section on the divine light).

(264) Cf. *Eth*. 1. 12. 323–8 where the three terms are used as equal. Cf. also *Hymn* 18. 63: *ἐν ἐκστάσει ἁρπάζει* ('seizes in ecstatic rapture'). Unlike his spiritual father Symeon the Studite, he does not use the term *ἔκστασις* in its negative meaning ('frenzy').

(265) *Cat*. 22. 88–112 (cf. the quotation in chapter 1). Nikitas describes this vision of Symeon as an ecstasy: see *Vie* 5. 20 (*ἐν ἐκστάσει ὤν*).

(266) *Cat*. 16. 43–4.

(267) *Cat*. 16. 78–92.

(268) *Cat*. 16. 96–9.

(269) *Euch*. 2. 167–72.

(270) Cf. Krivochéine, *Light*, 341.

(271) *Cap*. 3. 21. The quotation is from Gregory Nazianzen's *Disc*. 38. 7. 20–2; cf. *Disc*. 45. 3 [328 A].

(272) Cf. *Eth*. 1. 12. 329 ff.: 'When people hear that a certain saint, being in contemplation of God and rapture of the intellect, spent a certain number of days and nights in this state…'

(273) *Ladder* 27. 1109 BD (to which reference was made above).

(274) *Eth*. I. 12. 338–412 (338–9, 373–7, 406–12). Cf. the concept of the 'constant' ision of light in 'Greek Isaac', *Hom*. 43 [177]. John of Dalyatha in his *Letter* 40. 3 [432–3] speaks of one monk, who, at the beginning of his spiritual life, fell into ecstasy every time when the light of the Holy Trinity appeared to him; later his visions became more regular, he became 'accustomed to the beauty that surpasses all beauty' and acquired a feeling of the constant presence of God.

(275) As those described in *Cat*. 22 and 16: the chronological gap between them is about seven years.

(276) *Vie* III. 3–4. There is an interesting parallel to this testimony by Nikitas in the 'Life of Plotinus' written by his disciple Porphyry. According to the latter, Plotinus 'many times (*πολλάκις*) lifted himself…to the first and all-transcendent God…' Porphyry claims that four times he saw his teacher in ecstasy, mentioning that he himself achieved it only once when he was already 68: see 23. 7–24 in Plotin, *Ennéades* I. 26–7.

(277) Cf. Aristotelis, *Eth*. *Nicom*. 2. 3. 5 [1104b]. On the different meanings of *πάθος* in both Greek philosophy and patristic theology see Ware, 'Pathos'. The meaning of *ἀπάθεια* depends on that of *πάθος*, and so is also variable.

(278) Cf. Persaeus [*Stoic*. *fragm*. 449 = i. 99]; Diog. Laert., *Vitae* vii,117 [346]; Seneca, *Ep*. 1. 9. 1–2 [17]. Cf. Rist, *Philosophy*, 31. Philo transferred this ideal to the Old Testament righteous men: cf. the image of Moses as *ἀπαθής* in Philo, *Leg*. *all*. II. 102 [111].

(279) Cf. *Enn*. 4. 3. 32 [100].

(280) *Enn*. 4. 6. 2, 18–22 [174].

(281) Cf. Lampe, *PGL*, 170. For the idea of *ἀπάθεια* in patristic thought see Lot-Boro-dine, *Déification*, 70–86; Bardy, 'Apathie' in *DSp* 1, 727–46; Miquel, *Léxique*, 119–29.

(282) *Strom*. 4. 22 [309]; 6. 9 [468]; 6. 13 [484]. Cf. Origen, *Comm*. *Prov*. 19. 17 [209 A]; 24. 31 [232 A]. Cf. also the conception of the *ἀπαθής* as a true philosopher in Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc*. 26. 13 [256–8].

(283) Cf. *Comm*. *Psalm* 93 [34]; *Comm*. *Psalm* 118 [86].

(284) *Pract*. 39 [590].

(285) *Quest. Thal.* 55. 15–18 [523].

(286) *Prayer* 53 [1177 C]. Cf. his definition of *ἀπαθεια* in *Pract.* 81 [670].

(287) *Ladder* 29 [1148 B].

(288) Ibid. [1148 C].

(289) Ibid. [1148 B].

(290) Cf. ibid. 26 [1092 C]: 'the abundance of humility is the daughter of dispassion'; cf. 25 [992 BC].

(291) Ibid. 26 [1064 BC] and 25 [997 BC]. Cf. the discussion of Symeon the Studite's dispassion in chapter 4. For the fuller treatment of the theme of dispassion in Klimakos see Chryssavgis, *Ascent*, 184–8.

(292) *Comm. Prov.* 31. 21 [252 B].

(293) *Strom.* 4. 23 [315].

(294) Evagrios, *Pract.* 2 [498].

(295) Maximos the Confessor, *Theol. Chapt.* 1. 53 [1101 D].

(296) John Klimakos, *Ladder* 30 [1156 B].

(297) *Hom.* 45. 7 [300].

(298) Serapion 1 [413 A–416C].

(299) *Love* 2. 87 [137]. Cf., however, 'Greek Isaac' (John of Dalyatha), *Hom.* 7 [32]: 'It is better for you to eat deadly poison than to eat with a woman, even if it should be your mother or sister'.

(300) *Ladder* 15 [892 D]. Cf. the episode involving Nonnos, Bishop of Heliopolis, in *L. Pelag.* [665 AB]. In monastic literature, woman is traditionally regarded as a source of sexual desire, and so the insistence upon the necessity to avoid any kind of contact with women is a commonplace. (One should not forget that Byzantine monastic literature was almost entirely dominated by male writers; among a very few exceptions are several nuns whose sayings are included in *the Apophthegmata*: cf. Ward, 'Apophthegmata'). The theme of avoidance of women is much more developed than that of being dispassionate when communicating with them. Klimakos himself, after the episode with Nonnos, tells us of how 'the demon of sensuality', in order to destroy a monk, suggests to him extreme piety and even a fountain of tears while he is sitting with women and teaching them concerning death, judgement, and chastity: Ladder 15 [893 C].

(301) *Ladder* 15 [893 A]; cf. *Egypt. Solit.* 67 [395]. Both texts are rather exceptional. In early Christian literature, secular music and especially playing instruments were usually regarded as demonic activities: see Clement of Alexandria, *Ped.* 2. 4 [181–2]; 3. 11 [280]; Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc.* 5. 35 [364–8]. Cf. McKinnon, *Music*, 1 ff.

(302) *Eth.* 6. 36–46.

(303) *Eth.* 6. 1–3. The expression *ϵ'ν κόσμῳ* must indicate that the arguments were with κοσμικοί, 'lay' or 'secular' people, unlike the argument concerning tears which is described in *Cat.* 4 and which was with both laymen and monks (see chapter 1).

(304) This expression indicates that the opponents of Symeon were representatives of Constantinopolitan aristocracy.

(305) *Eth.* 6. 3–10.

(306) Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc.* 2. 17. 14–15 [112].

(307) Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc*. 45. 9 [683 C].

(308) *Eth*. 6. 114–45.

(309) *Hymn* 15. 205–8. See the discussion of Symeon the Studite's dispassion in Chapter 1.

(310) *Hymn* 15. 209–14.

(311) *Hymn* 15. 215 ff.

(312) See the discussion of this theme in the next section.

(313) *L. Anthony* 60. 5–7 [294–6]. Cf. ibid. 47. 3 [264]: 'Nobody had ever seen him without clothes (γυμνωθε´ντα), neither had anybody seen his body naked.' Cf. Palladios, *Dial. Chrys*. 17 [346–8].

(314) *L. Nikiph. Mil*. [31]. Cf. also 'Greek Isaac' (John of Dalyatha): 'Do not expose any part of your body in front of anyone, and do not touch the body of another…nor permit anyone to touch your body'; *Hom*. 7 [32].

(315) *Cap*. 1. 86.

(316) *Cap*. 3. 33.

(317) Among general studies on deification in patristic tradition see Popov, 'Ideya' (one of the first scholarly contributions to the subject, written by a new martyr of the Russian Church); Gross, *Divinisation* (the first systematic investigation into the subject); Lot-Borodine, *Déification*; Congar, 'Déification'; Dalmais, 'Patristique' in *DSp* 3, 1376–89. More recent works by Greek scholars: Mantzaridis, *Deification* (deals mostly with Gregory Palamas), and Nellas, *Deification*. See also two theses: Cullen, *Deification*; Russell, *Deification*. For the most recent and most comprehensive treatment of the subject see Larchet, *Divinisation* (concentrated mostly on Maximos the Confessor).

(318) For the biblical (including the New Testament) and Judaic background of this doctrine see Gross, *Divinisation*, 70–111; Russell, *Deification*, 100–220. For Hellenistic analogies see Gross, *Divinisation*, 5–69; Russell, *Deification*, 44–99a; Places, 'Pensée' in *DSp* 3, 1370–75.

(319) 'Patristique' in *DSp* 3, 1376. On the vocabulary of deification see Russell, *Deification*, 14–43.

(320) *Ephes*. 9. 2 [66].

(321) *Ephes*. 4. 2 [60].

(322) For the exposition and analysis of this doctrine see Alès, 'Récapitulation', 185 ff.; Kelly, *Doctrines*, 170–4; Lawson, *Theology*, 140 ff.; Wingren, *Man*, 79–90; 122–32; 170–80; 192–201.

(323) *Her*. 5, prooim. [15].

(324) Ibid. 3. 19. 1 [375]. Cf. Ibid 4. 33. 4 [811–13]. On deification in Irenaeus see Wingren, *Man*, 207–13.

(325) *Protr*. 11 [81]. Cf. Gross, *Divinisation*, 163. On Clement's understanding of deification see Butterworth, 'Deification'.

(326) *Strom*. 6. 9 [468]. Cf. *Ped*. 1. 12 [149]: 'We learn the heavenly life, through which we are being deified.' Perceiving deification in its moral and intellectual aspects, Clement rejected the idea of the ontological participation of man in the divine: 'We cannot imagine man as a part of God or as of the same nature with God'; *Strom*. 2. 16 [153].

(327) *Strom*. 7. 10 [41].

(328) *Incarn*. 54. 2 [458]. Cf. *Adelph*. 4 [1077 A]: '[The Son of God] became man so that we became gods through

Him.'

(329) *Arian*. 3. 19 [361 C–364 A]. Cf. the same distinction in Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm*. *John* 1. 9 [133–4].

(330) Cf. Dalmais, 'Patristique' in *DSp* 3, 1382–3.

(331) *Disc*. 43. 48 [228]. The phrase was allegedly pronounced by Basil in the presence of the emperor's official who accused Basil of disobedience to the emperor and threatened him with punishment.

(332) Cf. Winslow, *Dynamics*, 179.

(333) Cf. θ∈΄ωσις, θ∈ὸς γἰγνομαι, θ∈ὸω, θ∈οποι∈΄ω, ποι∈΄ω, θ∈ὸν, etc. in *Disc*. 2. 22; 7. 23; 17. 9; 21. 2; 29. 19; 30. 14; 30. 21; 31. 4; 34. 12; 38. 11; 40. 42.

(334) *Disc*. 30. 14 [256]; cf. *Disc*. 30. 21 [274].

(335) *Disc*. 29. 19. 9–10 [218]. Cf. *Poes*. *dogm*. 11. 9–10 [471 A].

(336) Dionysios, *Hier*. 1 [66]; ibid. 2 [70]; ibid. 6 [118–19]; Maximos the Confessor, *Myst*. 24 [704 D]; cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc*. 31. 28. 10 [332] (deification though Baptism). For the connection between deification and the Eucharist in Maximos see Volker, *Maximus*, 473; see also Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 456–8. For a comprehensive account of Maximos' concept of deification in general see Völker, *Maximus*, 471–89.

(337) *Hier*. 1 [66].

(338) Cf. in his *Theol*. *Chapt*. 2. 25 [1136 B]: 'God the Word, the Son of God and of the Father, became son of man Himself in order to make men gods and sons of God...'

(339) Cf. *Ambigua* [1113 B]: 'Man's ability to deify himself through love for God's sake is correlative with God's becoming man through compassion for man's sake.'

(340) Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 457–9.

(341) *Ep*. 2 [401 B].

(342) Cf. his references to John of Damascus during his polemic with the Synod in Constantinople: *Vie* 89–92.

(343) Using this traditional image of iron in fire, John replaces the term 'fire' with 'light' (almost as if it were a confusion between Syriac nūrā, 'fire', and Arabic *nur*, 'light').

(344) *Images* 1. 19 [95]. Reference to Gregory, *Disc*. 40. 6 [208]. Note the link between John the Theologian and Gregory the Theologian, which is indirectly suggested by John of Damascus in the passage quoted.

(345) *Epist*. *Nich*. 10 [1044 A].

(346) *Serm*. *Ascens*. 6 [168].

(347) *Hom*. 15. 10 [132].

(348) As to Isaac the Syrian, he does not provide us with any dogmatic definition or theological discussion of deification; however, he speaks of the total transfiguration of human nature by the grace of God at the final stages of one's perfection, when one becomes full of divine light and contemplates one's own beauty (see the quotation in the earlier section on the vision of light).

(349) *Serm*. *Faith* 3. 31–2 [23].

(350) *Nisib*. 69. 12 [ii. 112].

(351) *Hymn. Faith* 5. 17 [22]. For the full treatment of the theme of deification (divinization) in Ephrem see Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 148–54; cf. also Brock, 'Introduction', 72–4. In the fact that the concept of divinization is to be found in Ephrem, S. Brock sees a correction to the widespread opinion that this concept is something that crept into Eastern Christianity under Hellenistic influence: *Luminous Eye*, 148–9; 'Introduction', 73–4.

(352) Cf. Kern, *Antropologiya*, 394.

(353) Seventh Tone, Thursday evening, *Stichiron* [*Oktoichos*, 592].

(354) Eighth Tone, Wednesday, Matins, *Canon*, Ode Eight [*Oktoichos*, 665].

(355) The Transfiguration of Christ, Vespers, *Stichiron* in Tone Two [*Menaion*, 469]. Cf. Matins, *Second Canon*, Cant. Three [ibid. 483].

(356) Transfiguration, Vespers, *Stichiron* in Tone One [*Menaion*, 477].

(357) Good Thursday, *Canon* by Kosmas of Maiuma, Canticle Four [*Triodion*, 550–1].

(358) *Disc.* 38. 11 [126].

(359) *Disc.* 40. 6 [208].

(360) *Theol. Chapt.* 1. 54 [1104 AB].

(361) *Deification*, 21.

(362) Cf. *Enn.* 1. 2. 6 [57]: 'man's striving is not [only] to be out of sin, but to be god'. Plotinus would not find a place for the idea of the transfiguration of matter, which, according to his philosophy, remains evil even when it participates in intelligible reality: cf. Deck, *Nature*, 79.

(363) *Hom.* 5. 8–9 [60–1]: the bodies of Christians will be glorified by the divine light; cf. 15. 38 [149–50]: 'all members of the body...become light, are immersed in light and fire and are transformed.'

(364) *Ladder* 30 [1157 B].

(365) *Theol. Chapt.* 2. 88 [1168 A]. Cf. also the following phrase in Maximos the Confessor: 'By nature man remains entirely man in his soul and in his body, but by grace he becomes entirely god in his soul and in his body'; *Ambigua* [1088 C].

(366) *Exp.* 4. 15. 13–34 [203–4].

(367) *Vie* 1. 1–5.

(368) *Vie* 111. 10–13.

(369) According to *SC* indices, there are more than thirty of such instances in 'Hymns' (see θ∈οἱ θ∈οὗν, and θ∈΄ωσις in *SC* 196, 258–9) and about twenty in *Theol.* and *Eth.* (see θ∈οποι∈΄ω, θ∈ός, θ∈όω and θ∈΄ωσις in *SC* 129. 496–7).

(370) *Eth.* 5. 31–4.

(371) *Spirit*, 260.

(372) *Eth.* 7. 598–604.

(373) *Eth.* 5. 314–16.

(374) *Eth.* 1. 10. 118–22. Cf. *Eth.* 4. 549–52: 'Christ...became man and partook of our earthly flesh in order to give us

substantially His divinity...'

(375) *Hymn* 50. 184–202.

(376) Cf. *Eth*. 5. 459; *Eth*. 6. 200–1; *Hymn* 8. 12; 19. 56; 30. 485; 54. 135.

(377) Cf. *Cat*. 15. 98; *Theol*. 2. 314; *Eth*. 1. 12. 309; *Eth*. 2. 7. 196; *Hymn* 7. 40; 44. 269;

(378) See the sections on Symeon's understanding of Baptism (in Chapter 9) and the Eucharist (Chapter 3).

(379) Cf. Krivochéine, *SC* 96. 151–9.

(380) See especially: *Eth*. 1. 4. 1 ff.

(381) *Hymn* 27. 90–5.

(382) *Eth*. 1. 3. 112–19.

(383) Cf. *Hymn* 1. 73 ff.; 17. 851–4; 19. 107–46.

(384) *Hymn* 44. 405–24.

(385) *Hymn* 29. 254–85.

(386) *Hymn* 44. 365–83.

(387) *Hymn* 44. 384–93.

(388) *Cat*. 14. 60–94.

(389) *Cat*. 14. 117–19.

(390) *Cat*. 14. 123–44.

(391) *Cat*. 14. 177–94.

(392) *Hymn* 23. 413–20; cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc*. 39. 8 [164]. The idea of endless perfection is developed also in *Hymn* 1. 180–3: For over the ages there is no end to this progress, for the termination of this growing towards the endless end (ἀτ∈λ∈΄στου τ∈΄λους) will be a grasping of what is totally ungraspable.' On the closeness of this passage to Gregory of Nyssa see Krivochéine, *Light*, 386.

(393) *Hymn* 8. 10–12.

(394) *Hymn* 13. 12–18.

(395) *Hymn* 15. 105–8.

(396) *Hymn* 30. 358–61.

(397) Cf. Ignatios of Antioch, *Ep. to the Ephesians* 4. 2 [60]: 'You are members of His [the Father's] Son'.

(398) Symeon uses the language of Paul in 1 Cor. 12: 23–4.

(399) *Hymn* 15. 141–57.

(400) *Hymn* 15. 160–77.

(401) See especially *Eth*. 1. 8. 1 ff.

(402) As is well known, it was Plotinus who was 'ashamed that he was in the body': see 'Life of Plotinus' 1. 1–2 in Plotin, *Ennéades* I. 1. However, Symeon does not seem to imply here the Neo–Platonist contempt of the body; rather, he is polemicizing with his contemporaries.

(403) See *SC* 156. 298–300 (scholium).

(404) As in Latin translation by Pontanus: cf. *PG* 120. 531.

(405) As in *DZ*.

(406) *Hymn* 15. 193–7.

(407) Cf. for example, some texts devoted to the Nativity of Christ; Vespers, Lity, *Stichiron*, Tone Two: 'A great and marvellous wonder has come to pass this day. A Virgin bears Child and Her womb suffers no corruption' [*Menaion*, 264]; Matins, *Sessional Hymn*: 'How He is contained in a womb, Whom nothing can contain?' [ibid. 268]; Matins, *Second Canon*, Canticle Four: According to His good pleasure, by a strange self-emptying, He passed through the womb, yet kept it sealed' [ibid. 274].

(408) *Cat*. 15. 68–80.

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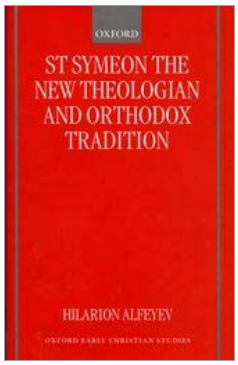

St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition
Hilarion Alfeyev

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General Conclusion

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Abstract and Keywords

This book has demonstrated that all major ideas of Symeon the New Theologian are rooted in Orthodox tradition and that his teaching corresponds to the ideas of preceding Fathers, including Gregory Nazianzen and Symeon the Studite. It can also be asserted that the ideal of 'living according to the Gospel' was a *cantus firmus* of the whole of patristic theology and that Symeon repeated what had been preached from age to age by the church Fathers. It can be claimed that Symeon's mysticism is a part of the mystical experience of the Orthodox Church and that the same sort of experience was the driving force behind the development of Orthodox theology. It can be maintained, after all, that Symeon's maximalism reflected in fact the general approach of the Christian tradition and the maximalism of Jesus Christ. What distinguishes Symeon from the majority of other church Fathers is his autobiographical approach to mystical themes, in particular his openness in description of his own visions of the divine light.

Keywords: Symeon the New Theologian, Orthodox tradition, Gregory Nazianzen, Symeon the Studite, Orthodox Church, divine light, mysticism, Orthodox theology, maximalism, Jesus Christ

1. Mysticism and Tradition: Symeon and His Place in the Orthodox Church

Our major concern in the preceding chapters was to show the fundamental unity between Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox tradition, namely Holy Scripture and the teaching of the Apostles and the church Fathers—a closeness upon which he himself insisted in the words chosen as an epigraph to the present study. This closeness has been observed on the basis of an analysis of Symeon's scriptural approach, his attitude to the liturgical worship, his connection with Studite monasticism and his general adherence to the patristic tradition of the Orthodox East. We saw that the polemic which Symeon conducted with his contemporaries always concerned crucial

questions of Christian tradition, such as true theology and sanctity, true repentance and the vision of God as light, salvation, and the deification of man; and that in all these issues Symeon took a traditional point of view and spoke out against the corruption and falsification of tradition. Symeon might therefore be regarded as a 'conservative' theologian, and he certainly did not mean to become an innovator or reformer of tradition.

At the same time Symeon's teaching caused tense arguments already during his lifetime, and his activity was at least once publicly condemned by the Synod in Constantinople, resulting in his second and final exile from the capital. In his fourth 'Epistle' Symeon speaks of himself as one who is 'condemned and despised by all people, not only laymen, but also by monks, priests, and bishops'.[1] It is worth quoting here a passage from this 'Epistle', which is still unpublished, where Symeon himself enumerates his 'faults', writing to one of his disciples:

> Pray for me, a sinner, since I am hated for Christ, persecuted for my desire to live devoutly in Christ, condemned by all people for...the veneration of my spiritual father and teacher; [since I am] claimed by them to be a heretic **(p. 272)** because I teach all to seek the grace from above and the visitation of the Holy Spirit...because I teach that those who have partaken [of the Holy Spirit] not only free themselves from all desires, passions and sinful thoughts, but also [become gods by adoption, remain near God and are beyond flesh and the world; and not only become saints and themselves bodiless-in-the-body],[2] but also see all the faithful as saints; and not only as saints, but as those who are clothed in Christ and have become christs; [because I teach] that he who has not acquired such a vision in the eyes of his heart is ignorant, since he has not become [living] in the light of Christ and has not partaken of it; for it is in this way that it is granted to see the light of Christ...And because I say all these things...I am despised by all as arrogant [*ὑπερὴφανος*] and blasphemous, and the devil has raised against me his followers and fights to stop me...from zealously pursuing to renew an icon [*εἰκόνα*, a true image] of living according to the Gospel [*εὐαγγελικοῦ βἰον*], which has become old and turned black...They delivered me over to hunger, thirst and death because I do not deceive them by saying: 'Don't worry, we shall all be saved without efforts and sufferings, without repentance and exact observance of God's commandments', whereas in fact, those who say such things pervert the whole teaching of Christ and the Apostles.[3]

Symeon indicates here that he was persecuted primarily for the following features of his theology and practice: 1. his veneration of Symeon the Studite and his teaching on dispassion and sanctity which is acquired during one's earthly life; 2. his call to seek mystical life and the conscious experience of the grace of the Holy Spirit; 3. his doctrine of deification; 4. his doctrine of the vision of God as light and of participation in it; 5. his insistence upon the necessity of repentance and observance of God's commandments. These features, together with Symeon's special devotion to the daily reception of the Eucharist (which was also questioned by his opponents), comprised his 'new theology', that is, his programme for the renewal of the Christian life: a renewal which was understood by him not as a reformation or revision of tradition, but as a restoration of and return to the traditional ideal of 'living according to the Gospel'.[4]

Symeon's opponents, in their turn, opposed to his teaching the following considerations: 1. though some people in ancient times did reach true sanctity and dispassion, it is unimaginable that in our time such a saint might appear; 2. though all Christians receive the grace of the Holy Spirit in Baptism and the other sacraments, it is impossible **(p. 273)** to have an experience of it in a conscious manner; 3. the deification of man takes place in the future world and in no way during one's earthly life; 4. the vision of God is also feasible only in the future life; 5. though the observance of God's commandments is an ideal for every Christian, it is hardly possible to observe them all: it is enough if we observe some; 6. though participation in the Eucharist is essential for salvation, it is not necessary to partake every day with a conscious experience of the grace of God. In other words, the ideology of 'God on Sundays only' was opposed to the maximalism of a monk, whose quest for absolute allegiance to the ideal of the evangelical life was received with perplexity and hostility. For this maximalism Symeon was persecuted by his contemporaries, including the representatives of the hierarchy, in the same manner as John Chrysostom and Theodore the Studite were persecuted for their moral radicalism,[5] or many church Fathers for their uncompromising attitude towards heresies.

In the course of this study, it has been proved that all major ideas of Symeon are rooted in Orthodox tradition and that his teaching corresponds to the ideas of preceding Fathers, in particular of Gregory Nazianzen, Maximos the Confessor, John Klimakos, Theodore and Symeon the Studites, and Isaac the Syrian. Can we therefore say that in some way Symeon's personal message was very much a continuation and development of that of his predecessors? It

can also be asserted that the ideal of 'living according to the Gospel' was a *cantus firmus* of the whole of patristic theology and that Symeon repeated, in his own time and for his contemporaries, what had been preached from age to age by the church Fathers. It can be claimed that Symeon's mysticism is a part of the mystical experience of the Orthodox Church and that the same sort of experience was the driving force behind the development of Orthodox theology. It can be maintained, after all, that Symeon's maximalism reflected in fact the general approach of the Christian tradition and the maximalism of Jesus Christ, Whose message was sometimes greeted with the same bewilderment: 'Who then can be saved?' (Matt. 19: 25).

What distinguishes Symeon from the majority of other church Fathers is his autobiographical approach to mystical themes, in **(p. 274)** particular his openness in description of his own visions of the divine light. All the elements of Symeon's doctrine are traditional, but the particular emphasis that he gives to specific themes is highly personal. Symeon's contemporaries were not entirely unjust when claiming that none of the great Fathers before Symeon had spoken so explicitly about himself and his personal experience.[6] It can be added that, among the ascetical writers, Symeon was the first to emphasize the central place of the Eucharist in one's spiritual journey towards perfect union with God.[7] He was the first to place the vision of the divine light as the main goal of one's ascetical struggle. He was the first to speak of dispassion and deification in such an experiential manner. Symeon's mystical theology is perfectly 'in harmony' with preceding and subsequent Fathers of the Eastern Church, yet he is one of the most personal writers Christian tradition has ever known.

One crucial conclusion concerning the very nature of Orthodox tradition might be drawn on the basis of our study of Symeon. His case illustrates, in a very striking manner, that the foundation stone of tradition is nothing else but an experience of the direct relationship between God and the human person—the experience of 'immediacy with God', which is commonly designated as 'mystical'. This implies that true tradition is unimaginable unless mystical experience stands behind it. Those who try to oppose a formal and rationalistic 'tradition' to an enthusiastic and inspired 'mysticism' fall into the mistake of misunderstanding what tradition is. Such people, whatever their rank and background (in the case of Symeon, as in many other cases, they were the representatives of the 'official Church'), while trying to defend what they think to be 'tradition', favour its corruption and falsification. One may say that if ever the tradition becomes deprived of its mystical and prophetic core, it tends to be transformed into its own antipode.

Our conclusion concerning the nature of mysticism within the Christian Church is analogous to this: true mysticism is unimaginable and impossible outside of tradition. The true mystic is not he who places his personal experience above tradition, but, on the contrary, he whose experience is in agreement with the experience of the Church in general and its greatest representatives in particular.[8] The **(p. 275)** historical rôle of the great mystics of the Church is very often the role of defenders of tradition and renewers of the ideal of living according to the Gospel: this is why they are usually maximalists and radicals. But it is precisely their maximalism which inspires thousands of ordinary Christians and keeps Orthodox tradition alive. In every age mystics emerge, or rather they are granted to the Church, so as to transmit their heritage to their contemporaries and to following generations, keeping the golden chain of sanctity unbroken.

2. Symeon's Afterlife in Orthodox Tradition

Having examined Symeon's relationship to tradition, let us now raise one closing question: how has the tradition itself appreciated Symeon and what was the fate of his spiritual heritage?

Symeon was widely known during his lifetime, and, though his teaching was disputed in official circles, he had many adherents and disciples. We do not know when he was canonized and whether some special act of canonization took place (which is unlikely), but it is certain that his veneration as a saint began soon after his death. His posthumous miracles, which are described by Nikitas, must have favoured his popularity. Nikitas, who was himself an outstanding theologian and an important ecclesiastical figure in mid-eleventh century Constantinople,[9] did his best to justify the doctrine and personality of his teacher and to make his writings better known and appreciated in wider Christian circles.[10] To popularize the name of Symeon was as essential for Nikitas, as it was for Symeon to promote the veneration of his spiritual father Symeon the Studite. In the example of Symeon the elder, Symeon the younger, and Nikitas we see how the idea of the continuity of spiritual experience, which was so ardently defended by Symeon the younger, was embodied in **(p. 276)** practice: the 'golden chain' of sanctity did not discontinue after the death of Symeon

During the ten centuries which have passed since Symeon's lifetime, his influence has always been discernible in the Eastern Church, though until quite recently it was mostly limited to monastic circles. It is very indicative that Symeon's name became important every time when the Eastern Church, and especially its monasticism, lived through periods of spiritual revival. Symeon's influence can be traced in both Greek-speaking and Slavic worlds. Some key moments will be outlined below.

The revival of mysticism in the Hesychast epoch was prepared by Symeon.[11] His name was known in Byzantium as early as in the pre-Hesychast thirteenth century.[12] In this period Nikiphoros the Hesychast composed his discourse 'On Guarding the Heart', in which many patristic texts were incorporated, including some passages from Symeon.[13]

Another text, which was to become of special importance for the Hesychasts, the 'Method of Sacred Prayer and Attentiveness',[14] was written most probably in the same epoch and attributed to Symeon.[15] This short tract, among other things, contains a description of the 'psychosomatic' method of the concentration of the intellect in the heart during prayer. We do not find any description of exactly this same method in Symeon's authentic works; however, some of his instructions concerning prayer are in fact very close to **(p. 277)** the method of concentration which the thirteenth-century tract speaks of. In particular, in one of his chapters he suggests that one should meditate sitting in a remote corner, having 'constrained oneself and being 'enclosed in oneself with concentration,[16] which corresponds to some of the instructions of the 'Method'.[17] Earlier (see Chapter 3) it was noticed that for Symeon there were no questions of minor importance, as far as the practice of prayer is concerned, and that he paid attention to the position of the body during prayer and other external factors. So if he is not the author of the 'Method', it is not surprising that the thirteenth-century Hesychasts attributed it precisely to him.

In the period of the climax of the Hesychast movement in the fourteenth century, the writings of Symeon were widely read and copied: it is from this period that we have a large number of manuscripts of his works. The predecessor of Gregory Palamas, Gregory of Sinai, refers to Symeon's writings *περὶ ἡσυχίας καὶ προσευχῆς* ('on quietude and prayer'), implying first of all the 'Method'.[18] It is rather surprising that Palamas, the greatest Byzantine monastic writer of the age of Hesychasm, whose theology might in many aspects be regarded as a continuation of Symeon's, mentions his name only occasionally and somewhat in passing,[19] while quoting extensively from earlier Fathers, such as Gregory Nazianzen, Dionysios, and Maximos. A convincing explanation of this might be found in the fact that, being always involved in polemic, Gregory deliberately limited himself to references to those Fathers who were authorities for his opponents, whereas Symeon's influence was considerable only in Hesychast monastic circles. One passage from Palamas' 'On the Holy Hesychasts' is, however, very indicative:

> You know the 'Life of Symeon the New Theologian', which was almost entirely a miracle...as well as his writings, writings of life [*συγγράμματα* **(p. 278)** *ζωῆς*]...[The names of some other later writers follow]. You hear indeed about all of these and about many others, who were before them, with them and after them, who...entreated us to keep this tradition [*παράδοσὶν*]...And we now speak on their behalf...[20]

Thus, demonstrating his high estimation of Symeon's life and writings, Gregory presents himself as an exponent of the same tradition to which Symeon belonged.

After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, it was the Grand-principality of Moscow that became the heir to Byzantine tradition and assumed, for several centuries, leadership in Eastern Christendom.[21] But a hundred years earlier, in the mid-fourteenth century, the influence of Byzantine Hesychasm was very strong in Russian spirituality. It is in this period (which is sometimes designated as the period of the 'second South-Slavic', i.e. Serbian and Bulgarian, influence upon Russian civilization), that a large number of Hesychast texts, including the writings of Symeon the New Theologian, were translated into Slavonic and became known in Russian monastic and lay Christian circles.[22] The importance of Symeon for a Russian reader of this period might be illustrated by the quantity of surviving manuscripts of the 'Slavonic Symeon' which are kept in different libraries of the world, in particular in Moscow.[23] The Slavonic version of Symeon consists mostly of his hymns: interestingly enough, the Slavs were primarily inspired by the most mystical work of Symeon.[24]

Taking into account the quantity of the manuscripts which survived from the end of the fourteenth century onwards, one may suggest that from that time Symeon became one of the most widely read Byzantine authors in Russia.[25] In contrast to the situation in late **(p. 279)** Byzantium (cf. Palamas), in Russia they did not distinguish between

ancient and later church Fathers, and Symeon was for them as authoritative a writer as the great Fathers of the first Christian centuries and enjoyed the same popularity.

As J. Meyendorff rightly pointed out, the great revival of monasticism in Russia in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries cannot be understood except in the context of contacts with Byzantium.[26] One of the most important renewers of monasticism in Russia, Sergius of Radonezh (1314–92), was in correspondence with the Patriarch of Constantinople, Philotheos Kokkinos, one of the leaders of the Hesychast movement.[27] Sergius was sometimes designated as 'the first Russian mystic':[28] at least, he was the first whose life was marked by the mysticism of fire and light to such a degree that he might be compared with Symeon the New Theologian.[29] The life of Sergius coincided with the time when the writings of Symeon were spreading among the Slavs. It is not surprising that they achieved great popularity among the disciples of Sergius: it is in the Lavra of the Holy Trinity, which was founded by him, that some of the earliest Slavonic manuscripts of Symeon, dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, are preserved.[30]

Another example of Symeon's influence on Russian spirituality is the constant appeal to his writings made by the leaders of the two opposing monastic groups, so-called 'Possessors' and 'Non-Possessors', which came into conflict with each other in 1503.[31] The majority of the church hierarchy, who were summoned that year in a Council, supported the point of view of Joseph of Volokolamsk (1439–1515) and the Possessors, but it was Nil of Sora (?1433–1508), the leader of Non-Possessors, who continued the line of the Hesychasts,[32] emphasizing the inner experience of prayer, renunciation, **(p. 280)** and detachment from the world.[33] In his struggle for the return of monasticism to its initial roots, Nil appealed to the 'tradition of the Gospels, Apostles, and Fathers'.[34] It is not surprising that, when seeking patristic confirmation of his teaching, he often quoted Symeon the New Theologian side by side with John Klimakos, Isaac the Syrian, Makarios, and Hesychast authors. Nil was very much attracted by Symeon's mysticism; thus one of many quotations from Symeon in his monastic 'Rule' is a passage from 'Hymn 13':

> O, miracle...! I see the light which is beyond the world, and, while sitting in my cell, I see within me the Creator of the universe; I speak with Him, I love Him, I nourish myself by the contemplation of Him and, being united with Him, I ascend into heaven...The Lord loves me and receives me within Himself, and embraces me...He Who is invisible to the angels and incomprehensible in His nature is seen by me and is united with my essence...[35]

Being himself an outstanding mystic and one of the greatest renewers of mystical life in Russian monasticism, Nil found support from Symeon's spirituality with its stress on inner experience and the vision of divine light.

One is more surprised to find quite a number of references to Symeon in the writings of Joseph of Volokolamsk.[36] He was also a renewer of monastic life, but his efforts were directed primarily to its external side: his major concern was the improvement of discipline in the monasteries, based on the implicit obedience of all monks to their hegumen.[37] He was therefore more inspired by passages of Symeon **(p. 281)** dealing with monastic discipline. In his 'Spiritual Testament' Joseph quotes Symeon several times; in particular, he cites the recommendations concerning attendance at church services:

> When standing at prayer, we should not forget, O brothers, about mourning, but stand with fear, without shifting from one foot to the other, without moving from one place to the other, without leaning on walls and pillars...[38]

We can see how different sides of Symeon's spirituality were appreciated by monastic renewers of different (if not to say 'opposite') tendencies.

Returning to the Greek-speaking world, we find a revival of interest in Symeon in the second half of the eighteenth century: this was due to monastic revival on Mount Athos and elsewhere in Greece. A large number of monks, known under the name of Kollyvades, advocated a return to the roots of Eastern Christianity through a rediscovery of patristic theology and the intensification of liturgical life.[39] One of the important features of their programme was a return to the practice of frequent, and if possible daily, Communion. Symeon the New Theologian with his extraordinary devotion to the Eucharist and his call to intense mystical life was very much appreciated within this movement. Some of his writings were included in the *Philokalia*—an anthology of patristic texts concerning prayer,

published in 1782 by Makarios of Corinth (1731–1805) and Nikodimos the Hagiorite (1748–1809), both leading members of the Kollyvades.[40] Nikodimos was personally devoted to Symeon; this devotion found its expression in the church office which was composed by Nikodimos in honour of Symeon—a remarkable liturgical text which is entirely penetrated by the themes of divine light and deification.[41] Another Athonite monk, Dionysios of Zagora, eight years after the appearance of the Greek *Philokalia*, published the huge volume of Symeon's writings, which included a Modern Greek translation of his discourses and the original text of his hymns.[42]

In the context of the Kollyvades movement, the influence of **(p. 282)** Symeon on the eucharistic piety of the Orthodox Church should be considered. It is in this period that the 'Rule for Holy Communion',[43] a number of prayers which are prescribed to be read before Communion, received its final form in both the Greek and Russian Churches: it consists of prayers ascribed to different authors, among whom, notably, there feature Symeon the Metaphrastis and Symeon the New Theologian. The verses by Metaphrastis attracted the compilers of the 'Rule' by their constant appellation to the theme of Communion as 'divine fire'.[44] As for the New Theologian, one of the prayers, which begins with the words 'From impure lips' and is included in the 'Rule', bears his name in its title: it is composed on the basis of Symeon's hymns[45] and reflects the most characteristic components of his eucharistic piety, such as the description of the Eucharist in terms of light and fire, the necessity of tears during the Liturgy, the deification of man, which includes both soul and body, as a consequence of Communion, and participation in the trinitarian light:

> Wash me with the tears Thou grantest,
> Word of God, and with them cleanse me...
> Yea, by [the] mercy of Thy kindness
> Thou dost cleanse and render shining
> All who warmly turn repentant,
> Thine own light bestowing on them
> And communion of Thy Godhead...
> Of Thy fire am I [a] partaker...
> I am like that Bush the prophet
> Saw, which unconsumed was burning.[46]

Every time when an Orthodox Christian prepares himself for Communion, he is supposed to read Symeon's prayer and share his feelings towards the Eucharist.

At the same period as the Kollyvades movement in Greece, a **(p. 283)** revival of monastic life was taking place in the Slavic world: it was connected with the name of Paisy Velichkovsky (1722–94), who was an abbot of the Moldavian monastery of Niamets.[47] His influence was very strong not only in Moldavia and Romania,[48] but also in Ukraine and Russia, where his disciples founded numerous monasteries.[49] Paisy, who knew Greek, translated into Slavonic a great number of early ascetical and Hesychast texts, among which were the *Philokalia*[50] and selected discourses of Symeon the New Theologian.[51] The whole corpus of Symeon's 'Hymns', as well as his 'Life' written by Nikitas, were translated into Slavonic in the same period.[52] As to the Russian translation, it is only at the end of the nineteenth century that a full translation of Symeon's discourses was made (though from the Modern Greek version of Dionysios Zagoraios) by Theophan the Recluse.[53]

Speaking of the heritage of Symeon, we should not only speak of how his writings were read and appreciated, but also consider, in a more general way, how the mysticism of light, which was advanced by him and the Hesychasts, continued within Eastern tradition. There are some notable examples of Russian saints in the modern period who showed that the extraordinary experience which was granted to Symeon is still living in the Orthodox Church. One such example is Seraphim of Sarov (1759–1833),[54] who combined severe asceticism with extraordinary mystical gifts and pastoral care for hundreds of people. He is known as being always in joy, shining with the divine light, which was at times visible for his disciples, when he became transfigured by the grace of the Holy Spirit:

> **(p. 284)** Imagine in the centre of the sun, [one of the disciples writes], in the dazzling light of its midday rays, the face of a man talking to you...You hear his voice, you feel him holding your shoulders, yet you do not see his hands, you do not even see yourself or his body, but only a blinding light spreading far around for several yards...'What do you feel?', Father Seraphim asked me...'I feel such a calm', I answered, 'such peace in

> my soul that no words can express it'. 'What else do you feel?' 'I feel extraordinary sweetness and joy in my heart, an unspeakable warmth and fragrance'.[55]

As was pointed out earlier, there is a striking correspondence between this description of the conversation between Seraphim of Sarov and Motovilov, during which the Russian saint was transfigured and shone with the divine light, and Symeon the New Theologian's description of the bodily transformation of his spiritual father Symeon the Studite.[56] Here we should say that the spirituality of Seraphim has very much in common with that of Symeon, and he belongs to the same tradition of mysticism of light as the latter. One cannot help recalling here, as a parallel to what we know about the Russian saint, the remark of Nikitas Stithatos concerning Symeon:

> Meekness flourished in him, desire for the divine love and righteousness, compassion towards the neighbour...His face was always somewhat shining, he was always joyous by virtue of the inner joy of the Holy Spirit...[57]

Another notable example, namely that of Silouan of Mount Athos (1866–1938) and his disciple Archimandrite Sophrony (1896–1993),[58] shows how even in our epoch the spiritual experience within the Orthodox monastic tradition is still in the same stream as was the experience of Symeon. The divine light, the divine love, tears and repentance, dispassion and deification: these are the central themes of Fr. Sophrony's book on Silouan.[59] Divine grace and repentance, love towards all people, and prayer for the world are leitmotivs of Silouan's own writings, which are included in the book by Sophrony.[60] What strikes many people in this book is that, in the **(p. 285)** mid–twentieth century, monks are able to speak about the highest states of spiritual perfection not on the basis of an academic study of patristic literature but deriving from their own experience. The following passage from Fr. Sophrony indicates his closeness to Symeon very clearly:

> The uncreated divine light is by its nature something totally different from natural light. When it is contemplated, first of all the feeling of the living God comes, which totally embraces man...And he does not know about himself whether he is in the body or out of the body...In his spirit he sees the Invisible One...Being in light, man becomes himself like light...The uncreated light, which proceeds from the impassive God, by its appearance gives man the godlike dispassion, which is the goal of Christian ascesis.[61]

The case of Silouan and Sophrony illustrates that Symeon's idea of the continuity of spiritual experience, transmitted from teacher to disciples, is still being embodied in practice within Orthodox monasticism. In this respect one anecdote recounted in the book by Fr. Sophrony is of special interest. In 1932 one Western scholar, a doctor of theology, when visiting the monastery of Silouan on Mount Athos, asked the monk responsible for the reception of visitors about what kind of books the monks read. 'John Klimakos, Abba Dorotheos, Theodore the Studite...Makarios the Great, Isaac the Syrian, Symeon the New Theologian...and other Fathers from the *Philokalia*;', the monk answered. 'Your monks read these books!', said the doctor with amazement, 'As far as we are concerned, it is only professors who read them.' Later the monk retold this conversation to Silouan, who remarked: 'You might have told the doctor that our monks not only read these books, but they may write similar ones...If ever these books were lost, the monks would have written new ones'.[62]

Is it not the same idea as that expressed by Symeon the New Theologian that the one who has an experience of life in God does not need books to read as he himself becomes a book in which God's mysteries are written?[63] Neither Symeon nor Silouan suggested that the reading of the church Fathers should be abandoned in a literal sense: rather they both emphasized that the goal of this reading is to become able to share the experience of their writers.

Speaking of the afterlife of Symeon in tradition, we saw that there has always been a 'Symeonic thread' continuing up to the present **(p. 286)** time. However, the influence of Symeon was until recently fairly limited and not comparable with that of the great Fathers of early centuries, such as Gregory Nazianzen or John Chrysostom. It was also much less significant than the influence of the key writers of Eastern asceticism, such as John Klimakos. It is in fact only now that Symeon has become one of the favourite spiritual writers throughout the Orthodox world. Symeon is widely read by both monks and lay people in contemporary Russia, where the turn towards religious life and spiritual renewal is so noticeable. On Mount Athos, which is going through a fresh period of spiritual revival, and elsewhere in Greece Symeon is also highly appreciated.

The rediscovery of Symeon in the last decades of this century is primarily due to the efforts of the scholars who published the critical text of his writings. For the first time the influence of Symeon has begun to pass beyond the bounds of the world of Eastern Christianity as his writings become known and appreciated in wider Christian circles. But it is not by mere chance that among the initiators of the critical edition of Symeon was an Athonite monk, a representative of Orthodox tradition, Archbishop Basil Krivochéine. It is within this tradition that the heritage of Symeon is not only an object of academic research, but an experience which continues to be lived personally. As a contemporary theologian says, 'the golden chain of souls which have been illuminated and transfigured by the fire of Christ's love passed on from St. Symeon to Palamas...and to the masters of Byzantine spirituality down to our own days'.[64]

The influence of Symeon is constantly growing. Only fifteen years ago Archbishop Basil Krivochéine complained that 'no church has ever been dedicated to Symeon';[65] now there is an entire monastery dedicated to him.[66] Symeon is no longer 'a poor saint', who, according to a Greek proverb, 'has no solemn office':[67] the cult of Symeon as a saint has now been re-established in many places and his icons are painted. Orthodox tradition has thoroughly incorporated the literary heritage of Symeon: this is the best confirmation of his rooted-ness in it. Within the Orthodox world he is now venerated as one of the greatest mystical writers, and his works are regarded as a manual of the true Christian life—something which he himself longed for:

> **(p. 287)** Blessed is that man who hears [my] words and accepts them with faith and puts them into practice, because, having found great blessings which surpass intellect, speech, and thought, he will bless my miserable hand for having written these things...[Through me] God has committed them to writing as a pattern for conversion and repentance...for those who with all their soul desire to be saved and who will inherit the kingdom that is in God our Saviour Himself, to Whom be glory forever.[68]

Notes:

(1) *Vatic. gr.* 1782, fol. 221 v., lines 23–5.

(2) This phrase in brackets is mistakenly omitted in *Vatic. gr.* 1782, but is present in earlier manuscripts; I borrow it from *Vatop.* 667, fol. 382v., lines 22–4.

(3) *Vatic. gr.* 1782, fol. 229, line 12–fol. 229v., line 23.

(4) Cf. Krivochéine, 'Writings', 324.

(5) I mean Chrysostom's efforts to raise the moral tone of Constantinopolitan clergy and aristocracy (including the empress), which were one of the main reasons of his deposition by the 'Synod at the Oak' in 403 and exile; cf. Theodore's refusal to recognize the divorce of the emperor Constantine VI, which likewise led to exile.

(6) Cf. *Cat.* 34. 184 ff. (quoted in the epigraph to this study).

(7) Cf. Krivochéine, *Light*, 104.

(8) The difficult problem of 'heretical' mysticism, i.e. the kind that leads people out of the Church, falls beyond the scope of this study. Examples of such mysticism are numerous throughout the history of Christianity (Montanism, Manicheism, Messalianism, etc.), but fortunately they are not directly relevant to our main subject: Symeon the New Theologian has never been proclaimed a heretic. It must only be pointed out that it is conformity to tradition that has always been regarded in the Church as the first criterion for making a distinction between 'true' and 'heretical' mysticism.

(9) See the analysis of his theology and mysticism in Völker, *Praxis*, 456–89. It has been noticed that in his theology Nikitas was much more dependent on Dionysios that on Symeon; in spite of his high veneration of Symeon, he never quotes the latter in his theological tracts: Darrouzès, *SC* 81. 34 ff.

(10) On his edition of Symeon's writings see Krivochéine, 'Symeon i Nikita'. On his'Life of Symeon' see Hausherr, *Mystique*, pp. xv–xxxvii.

(11) Cf. Lot-Borodine, *Cabasilas*, 183–4.

(12) On the predecessors of Hesychasm in this period see Meyendorff, *Palamas*, 56–71; idem., *Study*, 13–27.

(13) There is no critical edition of this discourse. The text printed in *PG* 147. 945 ff. seems to be rather incomplete: it includes only one passage from Symeon. However, some manuscripts, in particular *Vind. theol.* 274 and *Baroc. 69*, contain more than twenty passages from Symeon; see Darrouzes, *SC* 51–bis. 116–19. The passages quoted in the manuscript version of the discourse are mostly from Symeon's 'Chapters', as well as from *Hymn* 21; some passages are not identifiable (including the one quoted in *PG* version).

(14) Text published in Hausherr, *Méthode*, 150–72.

(15) In the manuscript tradition it exists under the name of Symeon, but somewhat separately: it is not normally included in the basic collection of his writings. The style and the contents of the discourse differ from the original writings of Symeon; there are also some themes in the discourse which we do not encounter in Symeon's genuine works (in particular, the warnings about false visions of light): cf. Krivochéine, *Light*, 79. I. Hausherr, while rejecting Symeon's authorship of the tract, ascribed it to Nikiphoros: see *Méthode*, 129–34. More recently A. Rigo proved that the attribution of the 'Method' to Nikiphoros is ungrounded; however, this scholar also dates the tract to the 13th century: see 'Niceforo'.

(16) *Cap.* 1.46.

(17) Cf. 'So, sitting in the stillness of the cell and in a remote corner...lower your head so that your beard touches your chest...constrain your breathing...so that you do not breath freely, and endeavour with your mind to find the innermost place in your heart where all the powers of your soul are hidden and reside': *Méthode*, 164 [68].

(18) *Prayer* 1 [72]; 11 [79].

(19) Cf. Meyendorff, *Study*, 155: 'In his [Symeon's] Christocentrism, his eucharistic spirituality and his theology concerning the light, Palamas certainly owes much to that great mystic of the eleventh century, to whom however he scarcely ever refers.' One may perceive certain traces of Symeon's influence also in the doctrine of Palamas of the vision of God and deification, while in his teaching on prayer Palamas was certainly influenced by the 'Method' ascribed to Symeon.

(20) *Triads* 1. 2. 12 [404–5].

(21) Cf. Ware, *Church*, 102.

(22) Cf. Meyendorff, *Russia*, 119–24.

(23) Cf. manuscript *Mosc. Acad.* 3 (49) of I4th–15th centuries (the description in Leonid, *Svedeniya* i. 4); *Mosc. Acad.* 33 (154), 15th century [Leonid, *Svedeniya* ii. 133]; *Mosc. Acad.* 126 (470) and 127 (471), 15th century [Josiph, *Opis*, 87]. For Slavonic codices of Bulgarian provenance see Stoyanov and Kodov, *Opis*, 237.

(24) E.g., *Mosc. Acad.* 3 (49) includes *Cat.* 26; 6; 8; 2; 4; *Myst. Prayer, Hymn* 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 13; 14; 28; 36; 37; 43; 46; 47; 56; 57; extracts from *Cap.*, extracts under the title 'On Prayer'; the *Method*', other extracts from *Cap.* This fixed number of Symeon's writings, in the same order, we find in other Slavonic codices, such as *Mosc. Synod.* 164 (950), 15th century; *Mosc. Synod.* 165 (650), 16th century; *Mosc. Synod.* 167 (653) and 168 (884), 17th century [Opisanie *Mosc. Synod*, ii. 2, 434–47].

(25) I therefore disagree with A. Lascaris, who says (on what basis?): 'it is difficult to believe that Symeon had any special place in Russia'; *Liberation*, p. xxxi.

(26) *Russia*, 132.

(27) Cf. Tikhonravov, *Zhitiya*, 44–5.

(28) Kologrivoff, *Ocherki*, 109.

(29) His biographer Epiphanius the Wise recounts many cases when divine fire visibly appeared and was seen by Sergius and his disciples: once the disciple saw the divine fire proceeding from his hand while he was giving a blessing; at another time the fire was seen descending into the chalice while Sergius was celebrating the Liturgy. Sergius is also reported as having seen the divine light: cf. Kologrivoff, *Ocherki*, 100.

(30) Cf. Prokhorov, 'Literatura', 320–1.

(31) On this polemic see Behr-Sigel, 'Nil'.

(32) Cf. Meyendorff, *Russia*, 273. On the influence of the Hesychasm on Nil see Davids, 'Nil'. For a general introduction into Nil's doctrine and spirituality see Maloney, *Nil*.

(33) The conflict arose around the question of the monastic ownership of land. The Possessors emphasized the social importance of monasticism, the need for pastoral care, help for the sick and poor, hospitality and teaching in schools: for these reasons the monasteries needed to have money, own land, and possess slaves. The Non- Possessors, on the contrary, spoke out against the transformation of monasticism into a social institution, insisting on the necessity to preserve the initial monastic ideal of deliberate poverty: see Kartachoff, *Istoria* i. 451–7; Ware, *Church*, 104–8.

(34) Cf. Pares, *Russia*, 93.

(35) *Rule* 1. 2; cf. Symeon, *Hymn* 13. 57 ff. Nil seems to quote from memory as the passage is given in an abbreviated form. Among other writings by Symeon which are quoted by Nil, there are *Hymn* 4 and *Cat*. 4, as well as the passage from Symeon included in the *Discourse* by Nikiphoros the Hesychast (see above). Though all these writings of Symeon were translated into Slavonic, Nil might well have read some of them in Greek as he learned this language on Mount Athos: see Kologrivoff, *Ocherki*, 170.

(36) Though he was an opponent of Nil on the Council of 1503, he was also an outstanding religious writer and an important figure in Russian monasticism.

(37) For his life and spirituality see Spidlik, *Joseph*. The monastery of Joseph possessed a rich library, in which a large number of manuscripts contained the writings of Symeon: see Likhachiov, *Tsentry*, 32, 78–9, 348–9.

(38) *Testament* [512–13]; cf. Symeon, *Cat*. 26. 23 ff. (quoted in Chapter 3 of this study).

(39) Ware, *Church*, 100.

(40) On their life and teaching see Cavarnos, *Macarios*; idem, *Nicodemos*.

(41) See *Akolouthia*. The reprint of 1975 contains a critical text of this office [pp. 45–79], as well as the *enkomion* [81–114] written by Nikodimos. It also contains the *Canon* and the *Oikoi* in honour of Symeon [117–34] which are composed by Gerasimos Mikrayannitis.

(42) See *DZ*.

(43) See *Horologion*, 495 ff.

(44) Cf. the reference to Symeon the Metaphrastis in the section on Symeon the New Theologian's eucharistic piety (Chapter 3).

(45) The prayer is written in anacreontic octametre, as many of Symeon's hymns, but it does not belong to the corpus of 'Hymns' as it exists in the manuscript tradition; on this sole basis I. Koder rejects its authenticity: *SC* 156. 21. However, a closer analysis of the text shows that many of its lines directly correspond to Symeon's authentic hymns: in particular, the lines 48–50, 54, 56–7, 66–8, 70, 73–6 of *Hymn* 17 are included into the prayer. So even if the prayer was not written by Symeon himself, it derives from him not only spiritually, but also textually: see Asmus, 'Hymns'.

(46) This rather free poetical translation is published in Elias, *Liturgy*, 278–87. For the Greek text see *Horologion*, 504–6.

(47) On his life and spiritual activity see Tchetverikov, *Paisy*; Hainsworth, *Paisy* (deals with his doctrine of spiritual direction); Kologrivoff, *Ocherki*, 347–64.

(48) On his activity and influence there see Joanta, *Roumanie*, 161–218.

(49) Among the followers of Paisy were the *startsi* ('elders') of the famous Optina monastery, who exercised an enormous influence on the spiritual life in Russia: see Kontsevich, *Optina*.

(50) First published in 1793.

(51) This new translation of twelve selected discourses by Symeon was published by the Optina monastery in 1852.

(52) Cf. *Mosc. Synod*. 3915 (19th century), foll. 1–41V.: the *Life of Symeon; Mosc. Synod*. 3916 (19th century), foll. 1–233V.: 55 *Hymns*. For the description see *Opisanie Arkh. Synod*., 695–701.

(53) Published in two volumes in 1890–92. Symeon's 'Hymns' were translated into Russian by Hieromonk Panteleimon (Uspensky) and published in 1917, on the eve of the Bolshevik revolution.

(54) There are many biographies of this famous Russian saint, but the most comprehensive collection of materials connected with his name is Chichagov, *Letopis*.

(55) *Beseda Serafima*, 17–22.

(56) See Introduction, n. 23.

(57) *Vie* 43. 1–10.

(58) Silouan was a simple monk of St. Panteleimon's monastery on Mount Athos; he was recently canonized in the Orthodox Church. Sophrony was his disciple for fourteen years; later he became the founder of the Monastic Community of St. John the Baptist at Tolleshunt Knights, Essex (England).

(59) Cf. Sophrony, *Silouan*, esp. 75–80 (the divine light and dispassion).

(60) See Sophrony, *Silouan*, 117–205.

(61) Sophrony, *Silouan*, 75–7.

(62) Sophrony, *Silouan*, 32.

(63) *Cap*. 2. 25.

(64) Bobrinskoy, 'Cabasilas', 505.

(65) *Light*, 394.

(66) The Monastery of St. Symeon the New Theologian in Kalamos Attikis, Greece.

(67) Krivochéine, *Light*, 394.

(68) *Cat*. 23. 224–33.

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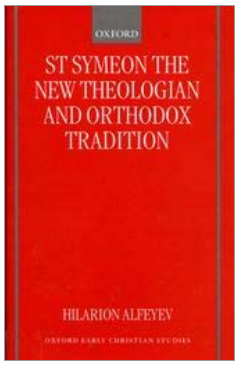

St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition

Hilarion Alfeyev

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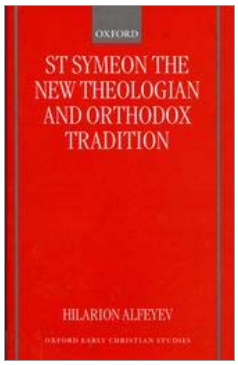

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Hilarion Alfeyev

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Notes:

(4) Cf. Krivochéine, 'Writings', 325–6. In the Byzantine tradition the appellation *καινὸς θεολόγος* ('new theologian') bears sharp negative implications: see Wirth, 'Theologos', 126–7. Thus, Gregory of Nyssa called the heretic Eunomios *καινὸς θεολόγος*, 'the new theologian': see *Eunom*. 1. 250 [i. 100]; 2. 42 [i. 238]; 3. 8. 9 [ii. 242]; 3. 2. 8 [ii. 54]. Symeon himself used the expression *καινὸς θεολόγος* to reproach his opponent in *Theol*.1. 92. Cf. similar usage in Gregory Palamas, who calls his opponent 'this new theologian' because he had departed from the tradition of the Fathers: *Triads* 3. 2. 4 [659]. One can perceive a slight difference in tone between *καινός* and *νέος*, but the second adjective may also bear negative connotations. Nikitas Stithatos, for example, opposes 'the new teachers' (*νέοι διδάσκαλοι*) to the church Fathers: see *Limits* 28 [392]. H.-G. Beck suggested that Symeon was for his contemporaries both 'Symeon the New' and 'Symeon the Theologian', and only later these two appellations were merged into a single *ὁ Νέος Θεολόγος*: cf. 'Symeon', 59 ff.; *Literatur*, 585 ff. In this case 'the New' would be a standard appellation given by Byzantines to recent saints in order to distinguish them from the ancient ones who bear the same name (cf. Hilarion the New, Stephen the Younger, etc.). However, B. Krivochéine, arguing from the fact that the expression 'the New Theologian' is contained in the earliest manuscripts of the 'Catechetical Discourses', asserts that this was the initial appellation of Symeon, which was only later transformed in some manuscripts into 'the New and the Theologian': see 'Writings', 315–27; cf. *SC 96*, 154–6.

(4) *ODByz* 3, 1960. The name of the monastery *ἡ μονὴ τῶν Στουδίου* can literally be translated as 'the monastery of those [belonging] to Stoudios'; we use the shortened form 'the Stoudion'.

(23) See Holl, *Enthusiasmus*, 316–26. R. Barringer has shown that some pieces of early hagiography are misinterpreted by Holl and that there is no clear evidence concerning non-ordained monks who heard confessions of lay people in hagiographical sources before the end of the 7th century: see *Penance*, 122. However, in the period between the late 7th and mid-9th centuries the centre of gravity of ecclesiastical penance, as far as the confession of laymen is concerned, shirts very markedly away from the episcopal towards the monastic sphere of influence: ibid., 154. As to the period between 886 and 983, some pieces of hagiography (e.g. 'Lives of Andrew the Fool', 'Paul the Younger', 'Luke the Younger') directly refer to non-ordained monks acting as 'spiritual fathers' and giving absolution (*συγχώρησις*,'forgiveness'): ibid. 177 and 192.

(71) On *ἀλουσία* (uncleanliness) as a traditional monastic virtue see Hunger, 'Bad- wesen'. As early as in the 4th century, Athanasios testifies about Anthony the Great that he 'did not wash his body with water': *L. Anth*. 47. 2 [262]. Gregory Nazianzen praises his friend Basil the Great for *ἀλουσία*: see *Disc*. 43. 61 [258]. Gregory himself, however, partook of the 'consolation of the bath': *Ep*. 126 [93]. Cf. Magdalino, 'Bath', 116.

(88) *Vie* 2. 23–6. Note the difference between Symeon and Theodore the Studite, who, according to his 'Life', 'passed through all philosophy, with both ethics and dogmatics, and also dialectics and logic' [117 C–120 B]. The basic principles of the Byzantine educational system were inherited from the ancient Graeco-Roman tradition, and the division of the Byzantine curriculum into two stages corresponded to a similar division in late antiquity where normal education consisted of the *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric, and dialectics) and the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, music, mathematics). Some Byzantine sources refer to three stages: so-called *προπαιδεία* preliminary education), *παιδεία* or *ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία* ('common education') and *τελεώτερα μαθήματα* ('more perfect skills', higher education). The basic models for the mastery of grammar were still the works of Homer, Sophocles, Euripides, and other ancient Greek writers, so in fact Byzantine schoolboys studied a language which nobody had spoken for many generations: see Lemerle, *Humanisme*, 99–103, 302–3; Buckler, 'Education', 200–20; Mango, *Byzantium*, 125 ff.; Wilson, *Scholars*, 18 ff.; *Kultura Vyzantii*, 366–400. Nikitas actually says that Symeon fully mastered basic grammar and then studied *tachygraphy* and acquired beautiful handwriting, but he refused to receive 'external education' with rhetorical skills. We should notice, however, that even secondary education in Byzantium was not on the whole available to everybody: as Lemerle indicates, nine-tenths of the population were unlettered: *Éléves*, 3 (cf. however, a more positive estimation of the level of literacy in Byzantium which is given by Browning, *Literacy*, p. vii, 46–52). The majority of those who received education belonged either to the aristocracy or to the clergy.

(90) *Vie* 3. 9–11. The rank of spatharocubicularius was in earlier centuries restricted to eunuchs: see Bury, *System*, 122; Yannopoulos, *Société*, 36; Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 301–2. In Symeon's time, however, it no longer required a eunuch status; see McGuckin, 'Symeon', 19. Some scholars suggest that Symeon could have been castrated in childhood: see Turner, *Fatherhood*, 19; Morris, 'Saint', 44. This supposition, however, lacks sufficient grounds, since neither in the 'Life' nor in Symeon's own writings is there a clear indication that he was a eunuch. Nikitas, who mentioned that Symeon's disciple Arsenios was a eunuch (Vie 45. 4–5: *τῷ σώματι εὐνοῦχος*), would have said the same about Symeon if he also were one: for the Byzantine mentality there was nothing negative about this (the comparison with a eunuch in *Vie* 147. 6 refers to Symeon's posthumous 'angelic' state). Indirect proofs that Symeon was not a eunuch, for example, his allusion to nocturnal pollution in *Euch*. 1. 141–6, should also be taken into account.

(1) Arseniev, 'Teaching', 16 ff.; Bouyer, *Église*, 27–30; idem., *Meaning*, 1; Bulgakov, *Church*, 20 ff.; Ware, *Church*, 196–7. Cf. also Roques, *Univers*, 226 (the concept of Scripture as part of tradition in Dionysios the Areopagite).

(14) The term is derived from Philo and is used in the *Corpus Areopagiticum* for the allegorical interpretation of Scripture: see *Hier*. 2. 5. 7–13 [16]; cf. Rorem, *Symbolism*, 99–105; 110–16. Maximos the Confessor prefers the term *ἀναγωγή to the ἀλληγορία*; as P. Sherwood mentions, the latter term is infrequent in Maximos: 'Exposition', 207.

(3) On the three types of monasticism see Deseille, *Lumirère*, 21–6. Cf. John Klimakos, *Ladder* 1 [641]. The word 'scetiot' is an adjective from Scete, or Skiti (Greek *Σκήτη*)—initially the name of the monastic centre in the Egyptian desert (now Wâdi-el-Natrun); later it became a common noun signifying semi-eremitical monasticism.

(13) *Τροπάριον*—initially (4th century ?) a short prayer written in poetic prose and inserted after each verse of the psalm; in later Byzantine use (6th–9th centuries) existed separately from psalms. *κανών* consists of nine canticles (odes), each of which includes several *Τροπάρτα*: cf. Wellesz, *History*, 171, 198.

(14) Christ and Paranikas, *Anthologia*, XXIX–XXX. Cf. the following story in the *Gerontikon*: The disciple came to the elder complaining that, though he 'recited the *canon* and the hours, according to the *Octoichos*,' he could not acquire true contrition of soul. The elder answered: 'This is why the contrition and mourning escape you. Remember how the great Fathers who lived in solitude and without prescribed tunes and *troparia*, but with some psalms only, shone in the world as true stars. Like that were Abba Paul the Simple, Abba Pamvo, Abba Apollo, and other divine Fathers, who raised the dead and cast out devils...and they did so neither by songs, nor by *troparia* and tones [*οὐκ ἐν ᾄσμασι καὶ τροπαρίις και ἤχοις*], but by prayer with a contrite soul and by fasting...'; *Εὐεργετινός* 11. 5. 3 [2. 169]. Canons came into use in Byzantine liturgical worship in 7th-9th centuries. This is why the episode with Pamvo should not be dated earlier than the 7th century (unless the story itself derives from the earlier period and the term 'canon' is a later interpolation).

(21) *Στιχηρόν* is a kind of *τροπράιον*, characteristic of the later Byzantine use (7th-9th cent.).

(22) *Προκειμενον* (from *πρόκειμαι*—'to lie before', 'to prelude') is a short verse usually taken from Psalms and preceding the reading of Scripture.

(24) These six psalms (*ἑξάψαλμος*) included Ps. 3, 37/38,62/63,87/88,102/103, and 143.

(25) *κάθισμα* (from *καθιζω*), 'to sit down')—a part of the Psalter. In Byzantine use the Psalter was divided into twenty parts; three *καθίσματα* were normally read in the monastic office every day.

(26) The *readings* (*ἀναγνὼσεις*) after each *kathisma* normally included early patristic writings, for example, by Ephrem the Syrian, Gregory Nazianzen, and others.

(28) *Παννυχὶς* (literally, 'all-night') is not mentioned in the *Hypotyposis* by Theodore, but is mentioned in the *Diatyposis* (*Διατύπωσις*) by Athanasios the Athonite: Dmitriyevsky, *Opisanie* i. 1. 147; Uspensky, 'Chin', 27. This office is nothing else but *μεσονυκτικόν* (office at cockcrow), and must not be confused with the all-night vigil, which existed in the Palestinian monasteries, but was not characteristic for the Studite tradition: cf. Dmitriyevsky, *Opisanie* i. 1. cxxix.

(31) The expression 'went out to the *κάθισμα* of the cell' (*Vie* 26. 19–20) may be understood as sitting on a chair (*κάθισμα*) outside the cell and having a rest. Another explanation is that Symeon went to church to attend the office of the hours (e.g. *τριτοεκιτ* which included selected psalms or even *κάθισμα*, if it was Lent); this is how I. Hausherr understands this passage: see *Mystique*, 37 (n. 4). It seems, however, that the first explanation is more probable.

(34) *Vie* 35. 19–20 (*τῆς ἑσπέρας μετά πάσαν ἄλλην ὑμνολογìαν*), 'in the evening, after all other offices').

(35) *Cat*. 26. 20–67. *Στιχολογìα*—reading of the Psalter divided into *κάθίσματα*. Concerning *ἀνάγνωσις* (which could be either from Scripture or from ascetic literature), as well as concerning *ἑξάψαλμος* and *τροπάριος* see above. See also Krivochéine, *SC* 113. 70–5.

(36) In the Studite use the third and sixth hours were sometimes joined together into one office, *τριτοέκτι*. This office was also performed in the Great Church during Lent: cf. Mateos, *Typicon*, p. xxiv.

(38) *Cat*. 26. 257–61: the term *λυχνικόν* (literally, 'with the light') is a synonym of *ἑσπερινός* (which is characteristic of a later usage): both mean vespers. Cf. the same usage of the term *λυχνικόν* in the *Typikon* of the Great Church: Mateos, *Typicon*, pp. xxii–xxiii.

(39) *Cat*. 26. 268: the term *ἑσπεριναὶ εὐχαί* ('evening prayers'), as distinct from 'vespers', must signify *ἀπόδειπνον* (compline): cf. Krivochéine, *SC* 113. 92–3 (n. 1).

(17) Ibid. 7 [801 C]: *χαροποιὸς πένθος*, 'joy-making mourning'; 7 [804 B]: *χαρμολύπη*, 'joyful sorrow'; cf. 7 [812 A].

(28) The service of the twelve psalms is one of the most ancient elements of monastic office; it existed in Egyptian monasteries already in 4th–5th centuries: see John Cassian, *Inst*. 2. 4–6 [20–2]. For Psalm 118/119 (*Μακάριοι ἄμωμοι ἐν ὁδῷ*) as part of the midnight office see chapter 3.

(56) *Ladder* 1 [632 A], title: *περὶ ἀποταγῆς βίου—literally, 'on renunciation of life'*. Cf. Dorotheos, *Disc*. 1, title [146].

(80) *Apophthegm*., Poimin 19 [325 D]. Cf. Basil, *Asc. Disc*. (40). 4 [877 A]: wine as βδελυκτός ('vile') for monks.

(83) *Asc*. 22. The three fasts mentioned are Great Lent (*ἡ μεγάλη τεσσακοστή*, seven weeks before Easter), Advent (forty days before Christmas), and the Fast of saints Peter and Paul (several days or weeks before their feast day, 29 June).

(87) Greek *ἰδιώτης*.

(21) I. Hausherr argues that Nikitas' expression *Μάρκου καὶ Διαδόχου* can be understood as *Μάρκου τοῦ Διαδόχου* which would be a corruption of *Μάρκου τοῦ Ἀσκητη*: *Mystique*, 7 (n. 3). We, however, do not see any reason for such a suspicion, even though Symeon himself speaks only of 'the book by Mark the Monk *On the Spiritual Law*' in the parallel passage (*Cat*. 22. 34–5). The expression *Μάρκου τοῦ Διαδόχου*, which does occur in some manuscripts, refers to Diadochos as a successor of Mark, but not to Mark himself. Generally Diadochos was the closest spiritual author to Mark; the writings by Mark very often precede those by Diadochos in the manuscript tradition: see Ware, 'Marc, *Traités*', p. xl.

(33) See Lampe, *PGL*, 528. Athanasios opposes Arios, who 'restricts the term Word to a conceptual sense' (*κατ' ἐπίνοιαν λέγει τόν λόγον*), to Dionysios, who calls Christ true God 'by nature' (*φύσει*);*Dionys*. 24 [516 B]. Gregory Nazianzen uses this expression when saying that the names we give to God differ in accord with the sense (*ἐπίνοιαν*) of discussion: *Disc*. 29. 13. 18–19 [204]. Leontios of Byzantium, arguing against the Monophysites, says that 'the humanity [of Christ]...is separated from His divinity in thought and not in reality [*ἐπίνοίᾳ ν καὶ οὐκ ἐνεργείᾳ*]': *Sever*. [1973 C]. In all these cases the term *κατ ἐπίνοιαν* ('by thought') serves as an antonym of *κατά φύσιν* ('by nature') or *κατ' ἐνέργειαν* ('in reality', 'in practice').

(36) Symeon discusses, for example, whether the term 'essence' (*οὐσία*) is applicable to God, Who is totally beyond essence: *Hymn* 47. 37–42. The essence of God is, according to Symeon, 'super-essential' (*οὐσία ὑπερούσιος*): *Hymn* 31. 6–14. On the other hand, once Symeon claims that he sees God in His very nature (*φύσίς*), cf. *Hymn* 52. 52;

elsewhere he says that through the contemplation of God, his own substance is mixed with God's essence: *Hymn* 7. 25–7. However, as B. Krivochéine suggests, the inconsistency in the usage of certain terms does not mean, as far as Symeon's teaching on the divine essence and energies is concerned, that we are dealing with a real contradiction. 'Most of his "contradictions" may be explained by the paradoxical and intimate nature of Christian mystery, which is so difficult, if not impossible, to express in logical, consistent language, especially if this mystery is approached in a concrete, existential fashion, as in the case with Symeon': *Light*, 198; cf. 'Essence', 168–70. We must also take into account that the controversy concerning the distinction between God's nature and energies took place in Byzantium three centuries after Symeon, who was not engaged in any specific argument about this matter, and so did not need to be so precise.

(50) Cf. B. Krivochéine's observations concerning the term *ὁ ἀνυπερήφανος Θεός* ('the God without pride') in *"Ανυπεήφανος,'* 485 ff.

(69) Alfeyev, *Tainstvo*, 33. This classification of ours does not pretend to be exhaustive. One may regard terms with both superlative and negative prefixes (*ὑπεράῤῥητος*, super-unknowable; *ὑπεράῤῥητος*, super-unspeakable) as belonging to two separate categories. On the other hand, one may reduce our third and fourth categories to one, joining paradoxical assertions and oxymorons into one group.

(82) Accordingly *Hymn* 1. 6; *Hymn* 4. 41;*Myst. Prayer* 5;*Hymn* 23. 5. These four terms are equivalent of Dionysian *ἄῤῥητος* (inexpressible), which is also used by Symeon: *Hymn* 1. 6; 20. 242; 36. 59.

(114) Cf. Maximos the Conferssor, *Quest*. 8. 15–18 [77]. 'God and the Father is light in the light, that is, of the Son and the Holy Spirit…[They are] one and the same, being thrice-shining (τρισσοφαές) according to the mode of existence.'

(83) Gregory Nazianzen in *Poes. hist*. 45 [1358 A] distinguishes two intellects in the fallen man: one good and another evil (according to the variant reading: *ἔστιν ἐμοὶ διπλοῦς νόος*).

(10) See Murray, *Symbols*, 239–76. The expression 'pilgrim Church' is of Western origin; Augustine calls the Church 'a pilgrim in a foreign land': *City* 18. 51 [650]. At the same time, this expression corresponds to Hebrews 13:14 ('Here we have no abiding city'; cf. also Heb. 11: 13; 1 Pet. 2: 11) and to the general ecclesiological approach of the Eastern Fathers: cf. *Diogn*. 5. 2 [62]. Cf. also Irenaeus, *Her*. 4. 21. 3 [683]: the Church is built on the foreign land of this world. The concept of *ξενιτεία* ('pilgrimage': see the discussion in Chapter 4) may be regarded as a particular monastic development of the early Christian notion of a pilgrim Church.

(42) Cf. *Horn. Rom. 16* [254], where, interpreting Rom. 8: 29–30, Chrysostom advances the idea of the universal call: 'If the call alone would be sufficient, why have not all been saved? Because…not only the call [from God] but also the will (*πρόθεσις*) of those who are called are the reason of their salvation. The call is not compulsion or constraint. All have been called, but not all followed the call.'

(96) 'Being baptized anew (*ἑκ δτυέρου* for the second time) by tears': *Rich* 42 [190].

(97) Origen speaks of the 'Baptism of fire' as an act of the Holy Spirit signifying a Christian's entry into a more perfect life: *Comm. John* 6. 32–3 [141–3]. Gregory Nazianzen speaks of the five Baptisms, including one 'of tears': *Disc*. 39. 17 [186–8]. Basil speaks of the Baptism of fire by virtue of illumination by the teaching of Christ: *Bapt*. 1.2. 10 [132–4]. Gregory of Nyssa says that 'to some I guarantee health through water and bathing (*λουτρόν*), but for others I wipe out the disease through tears': *Bapt*. [417 B]. Cf. the teaching of the 'Baptism of fire and Spirit' in Makarios of Egypt, *Horn*. 26. 23 [216] and *Horn*. 47. 1 [304].

(60) Note the difference between this assertion of Symeon and the interpretation of John 1:18 by John Chrysostom. The latter suggests that the word ἐξηγήσατο ('he has revealed') 'indicates the clearer and more evident teaching which [Christ] gave': *Hom. John* 15 [100]. Chrysostom equates the 'revelation' with the teaching of Christ, as well as the 'vision of God' with knowledge of His existence. Any kind of 'vision of the divinity' is, therefore, rejected. Earlier (in Chapter 2) a similar difference between Symeon and Chrysostom in their understanding of Matt. 5: 8 was observed. It is obvious that the theme of vision of God was treated by both authors in quite a different way.

(62) The opponents of Symeon deny the interpretation of John 1:18 according to which the Son revealed (ἐξηγήσατο) the invisible Father to people. Instead, they understand the verse in the sense that 'the Only-begotten Son explained (ἐξηγήσατο) that no one has ever seen God.' Cf. John Chrysostom, *Hom. John* 15 [100]: 'What have we learned from the Son…? That it is impossible to see God and that nobody knows Him except the Son.'

(63) The *SC* indices point out about forty-five instances when the verse is quoted or alluded to by Symeon. Although the majority of these allusions do not imply the whole idea of 1 Tim. 6: 16 but only certain terms used by Paul (especially, *φωῦ ἀπρόσιτον*, 'the light unapproachable'), nevertheless the constant presence of the verse in Symeon's mind is noteworthy.

(69) Cf., for example, numerous instances in *Hymns* indicated in *SC* 196. 387–9 (φωῦ) and 376–7 (πῦρ). See also the section on the divine light below.

(93) The term φωῦ ('light'), for example, appears in 54 of the 58 'Hymns' by Symeon, in 2 of the 3 *Theol*, in the majority of *Eth*. and *Cat*. The verb ὁράω ('to see') is used in Symeon's *Theol*. and *Eth*. even more frequently than the term 'light', according to J. Darrouzes' statistics: see *SC* 129. 515. Other terms connected with the vision of light (*φωτίζω, φωτσμός, ἐλλάμπω, ἐλλαμψις, θέα, θεάομαι, ὁραις*, etc.) are also widely employed. As A. Krumbacher noticed, the terms connected with vision and light are especially characteristic of Studite literature: *Geschichte*, 677 (n. 4). Even taking into account the traditional background of this terminology, one can affirm that Symeon's extensive usage of it is extraordinary.

(112) Cf. *Skemm*. 2 [374]: *Θεοῦ γὰρ χρεία συνεργοῦντος*.

(165) Cf. *Hymn* 33. 64 (*φῶς νοερόν); 16. 2; 23. 222 (φώς νοητόν*).

(166) Symeon often uses the terms *διάνοια* (mind) and *καρδία* (heart) as synonyms of *νοῦς*, when speaking of the mystical vision of light. Both terms are of biblical origin and occur in the Septuagint, being also widely used in Christian ascetical literature. In particular, *καρδία* is one of the key anthropological terms in 'Makarian Homilies'. The term *νούς* derives from ancient Greek philosophical anthropology and is also used by Christian authors from St. Paul onwards.

(180) *Hymn* 44. 349–75. Cf. a similar notion, with use of the language of 'immersing', in John of Dalyatha: 'The soul sees the light which shines in it and transforms it into the likeness [of the light]…The soul is united with the formless light, which is the light of the Holy Trinity that shines in its creature. The soul is plunged into the waves of the beauty [of this light] and remains in wonder for a long time…It [remains] in the cloud of the light'; *Hom*. 8 [*Vatic. syr*. 124. 296a–297b] quoted in Beulay, *Enseignement*, 388–9. The expression 'the cloud of light' (φωτὸςνεφέλη) occurs also in Symeon: see *Hymn* 17. 326.

(197) Cf. the term ἄοτρον (star) in *Hymn* 18. 18; 22. 5; 22. 14; 42. 85; 45. 38; the term φωστήρ (star, lamp) in *Hymn* 17. 386; 49. 74–7.

(213) Cf. *Hom*. 7. 5 [74]. One of the most characteristic expressions of Makarios, which emphasizes a conscious character of a mystical experience: cf. similar expressions (with use of *αἴσθησις*) in *Hom*. 10. 2; 14. 2; 37. 7; 47. 11. Symeon also widely used these Makarian expressions, which might have evoked certain Messalian resonances: cf. Krivochéine, *SC* 96. 151 ff. There are in fact several ascetical and mystical terms which are characteristic of both Makarios and the Messalians. In particular, Makarios repeatedly employs the terms related to spiritual experience, such as *πληροφορία* and *πληροφορέω, αἴσθησις* and *αἰσθάνμαι, πεῖρα, γνῶσις*, etc., while the same terms are used by the Messalians. However, as C. Stewart recently proved (see *Working*), all these terms are common to the Greek Christian ascetical tradition as a whole, and so it is not surprising that we find them in Makarios. For the most recent and by far the most detailed discussion of the possible Messalian background of Makarios and Symeon see Hatzopoulos, *Two Outstanding Cases* (the author objects to the idea that there were direct links between these two authors and the Messalians).

(264) Cf. *Eth*. 1. 12. 323–8 where the three terms are used as equal. Cf. also *Hymn* 18. 63: *ἐν ἐκστάσει ἁρπάζει* ('seizes in ecstatic rapture'). Unlike his spiritual father Symeon the Studite, he does not use the term *ἔκστασις* in its negative meaning ('frenzy').

(276) *Vie* III. 3–4. There is an interesting parallel to this testimony by Nikitas in the 'Life of Plotinus' written by his disciple Porphyry. According to the latter, Plotinus 'many times (*πολλάκις*) lifted himself…to the first and all-transcendent God…' Porphyry claims that four times he saw his teacher in ecstasy, mentioning that he himself achieved it only once when he was already 68: see 23. 7–24 in Plotin, *Ennéades* I. 26–7.

(282) *Strom*. 4. 22 [309]; 6. 9 [468]; 6. 13 [484]. Cf. Origen, *Comm. Prov*. 19. 17 [209 A]; 24. 31 [232 A]. Cf. also the conception of the *ἀπαθής* as a true philosopher in Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc*. 26. 13 [256–8].

(303) *Eth*. 6. 1–3. The expression *ϵ᾽ν κόσμῳ* must indicate that the arguments were with κοσμικοί, 'lay' or 'secular' people, unlike the argument concerning tears which is described in *Cat*. 4 and which was with both laymen and monks (see chapter 1).

(313) *L. Anthony* 60. 5–7 [294–6]. Cf. ibid. 47. 3 [264]: 'Nobody had ever seen him without clothes (γυμνωθϵ΄ντα), neither had anybody seen his body naked.' Cf. Palladios, *Dial. Chrys*. 17 [346–8].

(333) Cf. θϵ΄ωσις, θϵὸς γίγνομαι, θϵόω, θϵοποιϵ΄ω, ποιϵ΄ω, θϵόν, etc. in *Disc*. 2. 22; 7. 23; 17. 9; 21. 2; 29. 19; 30. 14; 30. 21; 31. 4; 34. 12; 38. 11; 40. 42.

(369) According to *SC* indices, there are more than thirty of such instances in 'Hymns' (see θϵοὶ θϵοῦν, and θϵ΄ωσις in *SC* 196, 258–9) and about twenty in *Theol*. and *Eth*. (see θϵοποιϵ΄ω, θϵός, θϵόω and θϵ΄ωσις in *SC* 129. 496–7).

(392) *Hymn* 23. 413–20; cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc*. 39. 8 [164]. The idea of endless perfection is developed also in *Hymn* 1. 180–3: For over the ages there is no end to this progress, for the termination of this growing towards the endless end (ἀτϵλϵ΄στου τϵ΄λους) will be a grasping of what is totally ungraspable.' On the closeness of this passage to Gregory of Nyssa see Krivochéine, *Light*, 386.

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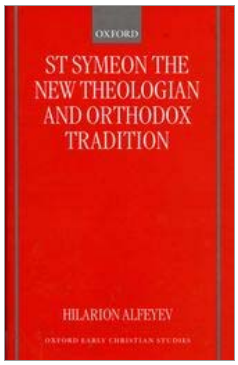

St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition

Hilarion Alfeyev

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Notes:

(4) Cf. Krivochéine, 'Writings', 325–6. In the Byzantine tradition the appellation *καινὸς θεολόγος* ('new theologian') bears sharp negative implications: see Wirth, 'Theologos', 126–7. Thus, Gregory of Nyssa called the heretic Eunomios *καινὸς θεολόγος*, 'the new theologian': see *Eunom*. 1. 250 [i. 100]; 2. 42 [i. 238]; 3. 8. 9 [ii. 242]; 3. 2. 8 [ii. 54]. Symeon himself used the expression *καινὸς θεολόγος* to reproach his opponent in *Theol*.1. 92. Cf. similar usage in Gregory Palamas, who calls his opponent 'this new theologian' because he had departed from the tradition of the Fathers: *Triads* 3. 2. 4 [659]. One can perceive a slight difference in tone between *καινός* and *νέος*, but the second adjective may also bear negative connotations. Nikitas Stithatos, for example, opposes 'the new teachers' (*νέοι διδάσκαλοι*) to the church Fathers: see *Limits* 28 [392]. H.-G. Beck suggested that Symeon was for his contemporaries both 'Symeon the New' and 'Symeon the Theologian', and only later these two appellations were merged into a single *ὁ Νέος Θεολόγος*: cf. 'Symeon', 59 ff.; *Literatur*, 585 ff. In this case 'the New' would be a standard appellation given by Byzantines to recent saints in order to distinguish them from the ancient ones who bear the same name (cf. Hilarion the New, Stephen the Younger, etc.). However, B. Krivochéine, arguing from the fact that the expression 'the New Theologian' is contained in the earliest manuscripts of the 'Catechetical Discourses', asserts that this was the initial appellation of Symeon, which was only later transformed in some manuscripts into 'the New and the Theologian': see 'Writings', 315–27; cf. *SC 96*, 154–6.

(5) It was critically edited, except the 'Epistles', in 1957–73 by J. Darrouzès, B. Krivochéine, J. Koder, J. Paramelle

and L. Neyrand in 9 volumes of the *Sources chrétiennes* series (see Bibliography). As to the 'Epistles', the first of them was edited by K. Holl: see *Enthusiasmus*, 110–27. *Ep.* 2–4 are not yet published: for their text we used the 16th-century manuscript *Vatic, gr*. 1782, foil. 205V. –230 (having also consulted some other manuscripts). Before the *SC* edition, Symeon's works were only available in the edition by Dionysios Zagoraios (1782), who published the original text of Symeon's 'Hymns' and an inadequate Modern Greek translation of his 'Discourses' and 'Chapters'.

(7) Among other major scholarly works on Symeon are: Holl, *Enthusiasmus*; Biedermann, *Menschenbild*; Völker, *Praxis*; Turner, *Fatherhood*. An outline of some major themes of Symeon's mystical theology can be found in Špidlik, 'Symeon', *DSp* 14, 1387–1401; Maloney, *Mystic*. Among the books and articles which deal with some particular aspects of Symeon's doctrine and spirituality there are: Hausherr, *Mystique*; idem, *Direction*; Fraigneau-Julien, *Sens*; Hatzopoulos, *Two Outstanding Cases*; Ware, 'Father'; idem, 'Mystery'; Kazhdan, 'Zamechaniya'; idem, 'System'; McGuckin, 'Symeon'; idem, 'Renewal'. Several theses on Symeon have been written, in particular: Stathopoulos, *Gottesliebe*; Deppe, *Christ*; Rossum, *Problem*; Lascaris, *Liberation*; Theodoropoulos, *Love of God*. Some other pieces of literature on Symeon will be referred to in the course of our study.

(8) In B. Krivochéine's *Light* Symeon is presented almost totally without reference to tradition. The most precise investigation into the connection between Symeon and the tradition is still W. Völker's *Praxis*, but it deals only with Symeon's asceticism and mysticism; other studies, such as those by B. Fraigneau-Julien, H. Turner, and A. Hatzopoulos, examine particular questions. Besides, all these authors when searching for parallels to Symeon limit themselves to patristic writings, which constitute altogether only a part of Orthodox tradition; as we shall see, in the case of Symeon patristic literature was not the only important feature of his background.

(9) Katz, *Mysticism*, 3.

(10) Mango, *Byzantium*, 119. Cf. Bois, 'Hésychastes', 8–10. Symeon was presented as a Messalian in Allatius, *Diatriba*, and Deppe, *Christ* (see Bibliography).

(11) Darrouzès, *SC* 51-bis, 36.

(13) Garsoian, 'Heresy', 107 ff. This paper is an example of how a scholar, on the basis of some external and superficial parallelism in ideas and expressions between Orthodox writers and heretics, provides us as a result with a totally wrong picture of an Orthodox author. Being prompted by the intention 'to show that....both orthodox and heterodox mysticism coexisted, and to recall the perpetual thinness of the line separating orthodoxy from heresy', which is in fact the driving force behind many writings of modern Byzantine and patristic scholars, N. Garsoian produced a list of 'corresponding points' between Symeon's 'Chapters' and the doctrine of Neo-Paulicians (the term has been invented by N. Garsoian herself). She suggests, for example, that Symeon 'rejected' Baptism and hierarchy, which in fact he did not (see our discussion in Chapter 9). The scholar goes so far as to postulate that Symeon's mysticism was 'perhaps affected by the contemporary Byzantine fascination with Satanism': See ibid. 112.

(17) Cf. Lampe, *PGL*, 893–4.

(26) Cf. Ware, *Church*, 196. On the meaning of 'tradition' see Flesseman-van-Leer, *Tradition*; Hanson, *Tradition*, 7–9, 237–60; Prestige, *Fathers*, 1–22; Kelly, *Doctrines*, 29–51; Florovsky, 'Palamas', 165–71; Meyendorff, *Tradition*, 13–26.

(27) 'Orthodoxy claims to be universal', Bishop Kallistos Ware writes, 'not something exotic or Oriental, but simple Christianity': Ware, *Church*, 8. For Eastern and Western theological approaches see ibid. 44–52.

(2) Haussig, *Byzantine Civilization*, 323.

(3) See Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change*, 141.

(5) Cf. Beck, *Jahrtausend*, 210–11.

(8) Wilson, 'Libraries', 62.

(9) See Eleopoulos, *Βιβλιοθήκη*. On monastic libraries in Byzantium in general see Volk, *Klosterbibliotheken*.

(14) *Hyp*. 16 [*PG* 9%1713 AB]; cf. Wilson, 'Libraries', 63.

(15) J. Leroy sharply criticizes the view which presents the Studite monastery as a centre of intellectual culture, or even a kind of conservatoire or academy. In the monastery there was a small school [cf. *L. Nich. Stud*. 869 C], where the pupils learned the alphabet, reading, Holy Scripture, and sometimes calligraphy; however, this school never became a university: 'Vie', 40–3.

(16) *L. Theod. Stud*. 31 [148 C] indicates that there were about one thousand monks, whereas Theophanis the Chronographer [Chron. 481] gives the number of seven hundred.

(17) Hausherr, *Penthos*, 139–40.

(19) Cf. Janin, 'Monachisme', 24–5.

(20) Hausherr, *Direction*, 110.

(23) See Holl, *Enthusiasmus*, 316–26. R. Barringer has shown that some pieces of early hagiography are misinterpreted by Holl and that there is no clear evidence concerning non-ordained monks who heard confessions of lay people in hagiographical sources before the end of the 7th century: see *Penance*, 122. However, in the period between the late 7th and mid-9th centuries the centre of gravity of ecclesiastical penance, as far as the confession of laymen is concerned, shirts very markedly away from the episcopal towards the monastic sphere of influence: ibid., 154. As to the period between 886 and 983, some pieces of hagiography (e.g. 'Lives of Andrew the Fool', 'Paul the Younger', 'Luke the Younger') directly refer to non-ordained monks acting as 'spiritual fathers' and giving absolution (*συγχώρησις*,'forgiveness'): ibid. 177 and 192.

(25) *Mon. Disc*. [1128 BC]. This text may be confirmed by another 12th-century piece of evidence: among the miniatures of the manuscript *Vatic, gr*. 1927 there is one, on fol. 5 iv., which presents the sacrament of confession performed by a monk, not a priest; see Martin, *Illustration*, 159.

(26) Hausherr, *Direction*, 100–2.

(27) Ibid., 100. Cf. a similar distinction between the monastic 'forgiveness of sins' and the episcopal power of 'binding and loosing' in Barringer, *Penance*, 163.

(28) Such a formula crept into some Greek and Slavic *euchologia* only as a result of Western influence after the 17th century: cf. Meyendorff, *Byz. Theol*., 196.

(29) See Holl, *Enthusiasmus*, 326–31.

(30) For spiritual direction in the pre-monastic age (the 1st to 3rd centuries) see Campenhausen, *Authority*.

(33) See Krivochéine, *SC* 104. 236–9 (n. 2).

(35) Hausherr, *Mystique*, p. xc.

(38) In Byzantine practice the term *Τρισάγιον* (thrice holy) signifies not only the hymn 'Holy God, Holy and Strong, Holy and Immortal, have mercy upon us', but also a short doxology, short prayer to the Holy Trinity, and 'Our Father', which follow the *Trisagion* at the beginning of each office. Cf. the usage of the term *Τρισάγιον* in the Studite *Hypotyposis* 2: '*Τρισάγιον* and "Lord, have mercy" 12 times' [*PG 99*. 1705 B]. The same usage in the *Typikon of Evergetis* 633–4: 'Sing *Τρισάγιον* and *troparia* "Have mercy on us, O God"'; Gautier, 'Typicon' 226–7 [27]; cf. also 100; 103; 226; and 975.

(39) *Cat*. 16. 57–77. The description of the illumination is very similar to that of *Cat*. 22. However, in *Cat*. 22 the hero who experienced the illumination was still a layman 20 years old, while the vision in *Cat*. 16 took place when the hero was 27 and a novice in the monastery. Nikitas Stithatos indicates that these were two separate experiences (*Vie*,

chs. 5 and 19).

(40) *Asc.* 25. Cf. also in Nikitas' 'Life of Symeon': 'The elder, wishing to cut off his [Symeon's] own will..., ordered him to eat and sleep'; Vie 12. 10–12.

(45) Turner, *Fatherhood*, 62.

(51) Palladios speaks (in the year 420) of the Egyptian nun Isidora, who pretended to be a fool: *Laus*. Hist. 34 [98–100].

(58) See Krivochéine, *Light*, 358–60.

(59) Turner, *Fatherhood*, 63.

(65) Kazhdan and Constable, *People*, 69. On the various monastic rules concerning bathing see Berger, *Bad*, 60 ff.

(66) See *Gr. Cat*. I. 36. There is no complete edition of Books 1 and 3 of the *Great Catechesis*; there are only some parts of them published by J. Cozza-Luzi in *Nova Patrum Bibliotheca* 10 (Rome, 1905). We cite from the Russian translation of these books (for the full title see Bibliography under Theodore the Studite), which was prepared on the basis of the eleventh-century manuscript *Patm*. 111, and which contains the most complete text so far published.

(68) Cf. the recommendation to monks not to attend baths in Diadochos, *Chapt*. 52 [114].

(69) John Moschos, *Meadow* 80 [2937A–1940 A].

(71) On *ἀλουσία* (uncleanliness) as a traditional monastic virtue see Hunger, 'Bad- wesen'. As early as in the 4th century, Athanasios testifies about Anthony the Great that he 'did not wash his body with water': *L. Anth*. 47. 2 [262]. Gregory Nazianzen praises his friend Basil the Great for *ἀλουσία*: see *Disc*. 43. 61 [258]. Gregory himself, however, partook of the 'consolation of the bath': *Ep*. 126 [93]. Cf. Magdalino, 'Bath', 116.

(72) The expression of J. Gouillard, 'Procès', 11.

(81) Hausherr, *Mystique*, 1–128 (=*Vie*). For the scholarly exposition of Symeon's life see Krivochéine, *SC* 96, 15–54; idem., *Light*, 15–63; Turner, *Fatherhood*, 16–36; Moda, 'Christ', 105–20; McGuckin, 'Symeon' (the latter is largely devoted to repudiation of Nikitas Stithatos).

(82) Its critical text has been published in *SC* 400. One may also compare the 'Life of Symeon' written by Nikitas with the 'Life of Theodore the Studite' attributed to the monk Michael: see *PG* 99. 113–232 (one version), and *PG* 99. 233–328 (another version).

(83) Cf. Krivochéine, *SC* 96. 16.

(87) *Νικήτα*, 9–11; '*Εἰσαγωγή*, 12–24. Hausherr's chronology has also been questioned by other scholars: see, e.g., Stathopoulos, *Gottesliebe*, 9 ft.; Kazhdan, 'Zamechaniya', 4–10. The main arguments against Hausherr's chronology are the following: 1. It contradicts the data of Nikitas' 'Life of Symeon': Nikitas indicates that Symeon was a priest for 48 years, whereas, according to Hausherr, he was a priest for only 42 years, from 980 to 1022. 2. Nikitas indicates that when Symeon the New Theologian established the cult of Symeon the Studite after the latter's death, it was Patriarch Sergios who gave his approval to this cult; after this Symeon celebrated the feast of his spiritual father for 16 years without obstruction until the conflict with Stephen of Nikomidia arose (Vie 72. 22–73.73.15). Sergios occupied the see of Constantinople in 1001–19. Even if he gave his approval to the cult of Symeon the Studite in 1001, the conflict and exile of Symeon the New Theologian must have taken place no earlier than 1016, whereas Hausherr dates the conflict to 1003–5 and the exile to 1009. 3. Hausherr's calculations are based on the presumption that Nicholas II Chrysovergis, who ordained Symeon, ascended the throne of Constantinople in 979, whereas some authoritative Byzantine sources place his enthronement in 984: see Grégoire and Orgels, 'Chronologic'; cf. Ostrogorsky, *History*, 585. If the latter date is correct and Symeon died in 1022, his priesthood would have lasted neither 48, nor 42 years. The chronology advanced by P. Christou corresponds more closely to the data of Nikitas' 'Life of Symeon', and so must not be ignored. See, however, objections by V. Grumel in 'Chrysobergès', 253 ff.

(88) *Vie* 2. 23–6. Note the difference between Symeon and Theodore the Studite, who, according to his 'Life', 'passed through all philosophy, with both ethics and dogmatics, and also dialectics and logic' [117 C–120 B]. The basic principles of the Byzantine educational system were inherited from the ancient Graeco-Roman tradition, and the division of the Byzantine curriculum into two stages corresponded to a similar division in late antiquity where normal education consisted of the *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric, and dialectics) and the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, music, mathematics). Some Byzantine sources refer to three stages: so-called *προπαιδεία* preliminary education), *παιδεία* or *ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία* ('common education') and *τελεώτερα μαθήματα* ('more perfect skills', higher education). The basic models for the mastery of grammar were still the works of Homer, Sophocles, Euripides, and other ancient Greek writers, so in fact Byzantine schoolboys studied a language which nobody had spoken for many generations: see Lemerle, *Humanisme*, 99–103, 302–3; Buckler, 'Education', 200–20; Mango, *Byzantium*, 125 ff.; Wilson, *Scholars*, 18 ff.; *Kultura Vyzantii*, 366–400. Nikitas actually says that Symeon fully mastered basic grammar and then studied *tachygraphy* and acquired beautiful handwriting, but he refused to receive 'external education' with rhetorical skills. We should notice, however, that even secondary education in Byzantium was not on the whole available to everybody: as Lemerle indicates, nine-tenths of the population were unlettered: *Éléves*, 3 (cf. however, a more positive estimation of the level of literacy in Byzantium which is given by Browning, *Literacy*, p. vii, 46–52). The majority of those who received education belonged either to the aristocracy or to the clergy.

(90) *Vie* 3. 9–11. The rank of spatharocubicularius was in earlier centuries restricted to eunuchs: see Bury, *System*, 122; Yannopoulos, *Société*, 36; Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 301–2. In Symeon's time, however, it no longer required a eunuch status; see McGuckin, 'Symeon', 19. Some scholars suggest that Symeon could have been castrated in childhood: see Turner, *Fatherhood*, 19; Morris, 'Saint', 44. This supposition, however, lacks sufficient grounds, since neither in the 'Life' nor in Symeon's own writings is there a clear indication that he was a eunuch. Nikitas, who mentioned that Symeon's disciple Arsenios was a eunuch (Vie 45. 4–5: *τῷ σωμᾳ εὐνουχος*), would have said the same about Symeon if he also were one: for the Byzantine mentality there was nothing negative about this (the comparison with a eunuch in *Vie* 147. 6 refers to Symeon's posthumous 'angelic' state). Indirect proofs that Symeon was not a eunuch, for example, his allusion to nocturnal pollution in *Euch*. 1. 141–6, should also be taken into account.

(92) *Hymn* 20. 98–119. With regard to the young Symeon's 'external appearance', it was probably quite pleasant. Nikitas says that Symeon 'differed from the others by his good looks and handsome appearance' (*Vie* 3. 1–2). Symeon in *Cat*. 22, which is regarded as autobiographical, speaks about the young George, of whom Symeon himself was a prototype, that 'he was handsome in appearance, elegant in body, manners, and gait, so much so that some for that reason had evil suspicions about him—that is, such people as looked only at the outward covering' (*Cat*. 22. 24–7). Perhaps, some 'good' people avoided Symeon because, with his aristocratic manners and rich relatives close to the emperor, he looked like a young careerist, while 'evil' people were interested in him only because of his closeness to the higher circles.

(99) The same episode is told by Symeon in *Euch*. 1. 87–110 (this time in the first person) and by Nikitas in *Vie* 5. 1–31: this suggests that the story in Symeon's *Cat*. 22 is autobiographical.

(103) Krivochéine, SC 96. 23.

(104) McGuckin, 'Symeon', 23. Without entering into a detailed discussion of McGuckin's argument, one may say that the main weakness of his speculations about Symeon's biography lies in the fact that he entirely depends on I. Hausherr's chronology, regarding it as unquestionable. As has been said (see n. 87 above), there is a great deal of uncertainty about the dates of Symeon's life, and several chronologies have been advanced by scholars; any attempt to reconstruct Symeon's historical background on the basis of one particular chronology risks falling apart once this chronology is proved mistaken.

(106) There is a story in the *Apophthegmata*, how someone came to visit Abba Arsenios, and, having looked through the window, saw him standing in prayer and embraced with flame: see Arsenios 27 [*96* BC]. In a similar story Joseph of Panepho 'stood and opened his hands to the heaven; and his fingers became as ten torches of fire, and he said: "If you wish, you can become entirely as fire"': Joseph of Panepho 7 [220 D]. Cf. also Pamvo 1 [368 C] and 12 [372 A]; Sisois 14 [396 BC]; Silouanos 12 [412 C]; Theodore of Pherme 25 [193 AB]. Another much later example is the

conversation between Seraphim of Sarov (died 1833) and N. Motovilov, when the face of a Russian saint became 'like the sun' and he gave out light and fragrance: see *Beseda Seraphima*, 17–22 (see the quotation in the General Conclusion at the end of the present study). Francis of Assisi, who was seen 'surrounded by marvellous light' during prayer, would be a parallel from Western spirituality: see *Flowers* 17. Something similar might have happened with Symeon the Studite in presence of his disciple. There is, however, one special detail in the case of Symeon the Studite: a fire was lit, while in other cases it simply appeared.

(108) Cf. *Vie* 12. 1–26. Servants were regarded as a common feature in Byzantine monasteries of that period; they attended their masters, served them meals and performed other necessary work: see Krausmüller, 'Stoudios', 74. Cf. the mention of a servant in Symeon, *Cat*. 4. 290–9.

(110) See Kontsevich, *Optina*, 9–10.

(112) Literally, 'when they struck the wood'. In Eastern Orthodox monasteries a piece of wood is often used instead of a bell to call monks to church services.

(119) *Vie* 30. 3 ff. J. McGuckin, on the basis of Hausherr's chronology, argues that Symeon was ordained by the Patriarch Anthony the Studite rather than by Nicholas Chrysovergis and that, in view of Symeon's rapid elevation to the hegumenate after only three years at St. Mamas, his previous transfer to this monastery from the Stoudion should be regarded as 'advancement' rather than 'expulsion': see 'Symeon', 24.

(122) J. McGuckin draws our attention to the fact that Symeon enjoyed significant patronage by the Byzantine aristocracy throughout his life: see 'Symeon', 25.

(128) Hausherr, *Mystique*, p. xc. Nikitas describes the retirement of Symeon as a voluntary act: 'everything was all right' in Symeon's life, but cares of the monastery distracted him from silence, so he 'decided to organize the management in the monastery according to the ancient custom and become free from troubles...Then, by the decision of the Patriarch Sergios, he willingly leaves the post of hegumen...' (*Vie* 59. 1–12). Therefore, apart from the 'will' of Symeon there was a decision of the patriarch. Nikitas describes the conflict between Symeon and Stephen of Nikomidia (see below) as if it had arisen after Symeon's retirement. However, he indicates, for example, that Symeon returned 'to his flock' after the argument with Stephen (Vie 77. 2) and that he associated with monks who were 'under him [subordinated to him]' (*Vie* 82. 11). There are weighty considerations for the assumption that the conflict actually arose during the period when Symeon was still hegumen, and his retirement was caused by it. Cf. Kazhdan, 'Zamechaniya', 9.

(129) Stephen was ordained Metropolitan of Nikomidia in976, but, after leaving his diocese, he lived in Constantinople and was close to the patriarch and the emperor: *Vie* 74. 5–12; cf. Hausherr, *Mystique*; pp. li-lvi. He was the author of several theological and hagiographical writings, among them, very probably, is the hagiographical collection *Menologion of Basil II*: see Beck, *Literatur*, 531–2. In some passages of the 'Life' by Nikitas he is called 'Symeon of Alexini' (*Vie* 74. 6; 93. 25; 99. 4), but the origin of this name is not clear: see Lequien, *Oriens* I, 594.

(131) In fact, the early Christian Church had not known the practice of formal canonization in a modern sense: the Church was alien to the idea (which was first expressed by the iconoclasts of the 8th century) that 'special human initiative is required in order to bring something into the realm of the "holy": Brock, 'Iconoclasm', 57. Veneration of a saint usually began in the area where he lived (the monastery, town, or even village) and either remained limited to this area (so called 'locally venerated' saints) or spread wider, sometimes throughout the Christian world. However, Symeon the New Theologian's lifetime coincided with the codification of saints by Symeon the Metaphrastis, who collected ancient lives of saints and made a new recension of them. As P. Lemerle points out, almost all the saints of the Metaphrastis' collection belonged to ancient times and only very few to the iconoclastic or post-iconoclastic epoch; it was a kind of 'antiquarianization' of saints: *Humanisme*, 293. 'The compilation of the Metaphrastic corpus and the Synaxarion of Constantinople', another scholar writes, 'and the opposition aroused by Symeon the New Theologian in his attempt to establish a cult of his spiritual father Symeon the Studite, indicate that the official Church was tending, from the end of the tenth century, to conceive of the communion of saints as a closed society, whose numbers were now more or less complete': Magdalino, 'Holy Man', 61. Symeon the New Theologian, with his idea of the possibility and necessity of being a saint, with his constant struggle against 'new heretics' who rejected

this possibility and with his self-established cult of Symeon the Studite, found himself in opposition to this movement and thus to the official Church. See the discussion of this matter in Chapter 6 of this study.

(133) Cf. Darrouzès, *SC* 122. 9–10.

(1) Arseniev, 'Teaching', 16 ff.; Bouyer, *Église*, 27–30; idem., *Meaning*, 1; Bulgakov, *Church*, 20 ff.; Ware, *Church*, 196–7. Cf. also Roques, *Univers*, 226 (the concept of Scripture as part of tradition in Dionysios the Areopagite).

(2) On tradition as the *ὑπόθεσις* (background, basis) of Scripture see Lossky, *Image*, 142–3.

(5) Origen speaks of the three meanings of Scripture: the literal, the moral, and the spiritual (anagogical), which correspond to the threefold division of the human person (body, soul, and spirit): *Princ*. 4. 2. 4 [312–13]; cf. Torjesen, *Procedure*, 39–43. In practice, however, Origen does not usually make a clear distinction between the moral and spiritual meanings; the question is normally about the two meanings of each passage: the historical (literal) and allegorical (spiritual).

(7) Daniélou, *Origen*, 170–1.

(9) Cf. Ibid. 166; Simonetti, *Interpretation*, 47–8.

(10) There are several scholarly investigations into the connection between Maximos and Origen: Sherwood, *Ambigua*; idem., 'Origenismus'; Ivánka, 'Origenismus'. On Maximos' scriptural interpretation see Sherwood, 'Exposition'; Thunberg, 'Symbol', 295–302; Blowers, *Exegesis*

(11) 'The Old Testament [can be understood] as a body, and the New Testament as a spirit and mind. Moreover...the historical letter of the entire Holy Scripture, Old Testament and New, is a body while the meaning of the letter...is the soul...For as man who as ourselves is mortal in what is visible and immortal in the invisible, so also does Holy Scripture, which contains a visible letter which is passing and a hidden spirit underneath the letter which never ceases to exist, organize the true meaning of contemplation': Maximos the Confessor, *Myst*. 6 [684 AB].

(14) The term is derived from Philo and is used in the *Corpus Areopagiticum* for the allegorical interpretation of Scripture: see *Hier*. 2. 5. 7–13 [16]; cf. Rorem, *Symbolism*, 99–105; 110–16. Maximos the Confessor prefers the term *ἀναγωγή to the ἀλληγορία*; as P. Sherwood mentions, the latter term is infrequent in Maximos: 'Exposition', 207.

(16) Cf. Blowers, *Exegesis*, 149.

(19) In the *Pachomian koinonia* it was compulsory for each monk: see Palladios, *Laus. Hist*. 32. 12 [160]; cf. Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 81.

(20) See *Apophthegmata*, Achilas 5 [125 AB]; cf. Burton-Christie, 'Cassian', 343.

(22) Anthony 3 [76 C].

(23) Cf. Burton-Christie, *Word*, 166.

(33) The term *ἀνάγνωσις* (reading) in patristic literature usually means 'reading Scripture', in particular reading psalms: see Lampe, *PGL*, 99.

(38) *Eth*. 1. 12. 1–8. One may notice the difference between Origen's interest in biblical criticism and Symeon's advice to avoid discussions concerning the 'external' meaning of the text. However, both authors would agree that the 'internal' aim of Scripture is what everybody ought to concentrate upon. Moreover, in practice Symeon very often discusses the meaning of certain biblical words and expressions, showing his attention to the 'external' meaning of the text as well.

(39) Ibid. 469–76. The term *ψευδώνυμος γνῶσις* is inherited from Paul (cf. 1 Tim. 6: 26) and was used by early Christian writers who struggled against the Gnostics. In Symeon the name which was applied in the second century to heresy, is given to 'external' (Hellenic) knowledge in general.

(44) *Theol*. 1. 325. Cf. Isa. 24: 16 in Lucianic recension of the Septuagint.

(49) The statistics are borrowed from H. Turner, who derived them from the *SC* editors with a small number of additions: see *Fatherhood*, 39–42. According to the same statistics, there are several books of the Old Testament which Symeon never quotes: Ruth, 1 and 2 Ezra, the Lamentations and the Letter of Jeremiah, Obadiah, Zephaniah, Haggai.

(51) H. Turner mentions 27 references to Psalm 50/51: *Fatherhood*, 40. Let us remind ourselves that this psalm is read in the monasteries no less that four times every day: it is included in the orders of matins, the third hour, compline, and the midnight service.

(57) See Turner, *Fatherhood*, 41.

(58) Cf. Hussey, *Learning*, 210. Cf. also J. Darrouzès' summary of Symeon's method of quoting: 'Symeon gives the impression of a man who does not read a text or a phrase in its entirety: he grasps one word or image, and this is enough for his eminently poetical and imaginative spirit: in this he is sharply distinguished from many Byzantine commentators and compilers...In his citations from the Bible, it is not the thought of someone else that he seeks, but it is an echo of his inner life that he rediscovers'; *SC* 51. 33–4.

(62) Gregory of Nyssa, *Beat*. 1 [82 ff.]. Cf. Basil the Great, *Sh*. *Rules* 205 [1217 C].

(69) *Ladder* 8 [823 BC]. Cf. Origen, *Comm*. *Mat*. 81 [48].

(75) Cf. Great the Basil, *Sh*. *Rules* 185 [1197 D]: 'Blessed is he who mourns for a sinner.' Cf. ibid. 194 [1212 C].

(78) *Beat*. 6 [141]. See also the section on the vision of God as light in Chapter 10.

(79) *Love* 4. 72 [226]. Cf. Origen, *Comm*. *Mat*. 86 [50]. Note the contrast between these authors and Chrysostom, who does not perceive any mystical dimension in Matt. 5: 8 but asserts that Christ was speaking here 'of mental vision which is within our power (i.e. imagination) and also of thought about God': *Hom*. *John* 15. 1 [99].

(94) Cf. *Rom*. 5. 12–21; Justin, *Dial*. *Triph*. 100; Irenaeus, *Her*. 3. 22. 4. Cf. also Krivochéine, *Light*, 313–14; Daniélou, *Shadows*, 11–21; Planque, 'Marie', *DSp* iv, 1779–81; Graef, *Mary*, 39 ff.

(95) This symbolism derives from *Barn*. 15. 8–9 [186–8], as well as from Justin, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and other early Fathers: see Lampe, *PGL*, 935; Darrouzès, *SC* 122. 182–3; Danielou, *Bible*, 262–75.

(96) *Eth*. 1. 9. 55–64. Cf. the interpretation of the Virgin Mary as a 'bride' of Christ in 'Greek Ephrem': 'I am also Thy bride, for Thou art chaste' [*Opera* ii. 429EF]. See Graef, *Mary*, 57–8.

(97) *Eth*. 1. 10. 11–20. Cf. the same notion in Maximos the Confessor, *Prayer* 397–401 [50]; cf. also Makarios of Egypt, *Ep*. 18. 6. 12; *Ep*. 27. 1. 7. S. Brock observed a parallelism between this notion of Symeon and similar ideas of Syriac writers of 7th–8th centuries: see 'Mary', 58–9; 'Prayer', 137–8.

(98) Cf. Thayer, *Lexicon NT*, 72.

(105) *Eth*. 2. 4. 9–19. The interpretation of Noah as a type of Christ occurred in Justin, *Dial*. *Triph*. 138. 1–2; and then in many Church authors: see Lampe, *PGL*, 931. Noah's Ark was interpreted as a symbol of Mary by the 'Greek Ephrem' [*Opera* iii. 529 B], John of Damascus [*II Hom*. *Nat*. *M*. 7 in *PG* 99. 689 B] and John of Evboea [*Concept*. 4; 1464 B–1465 A]. Cf. also the appeal to the Mother of God in the *Canon* by Joseph the Hymnographer, Canticle Five: 'Hail, All-blameless, who hast saved the world from drowning in the flood of sin' [*Triodion*, 432].

(106) *Eth*. 9. 415–26. This is not the usual interpretation of Isaac, who is traditionally regarded as a type of Christ or the Church: see Lampe, *PGL*, 676.

(107) *Cat*. 6. 138–9; *Cap*. 1. 78. The 'Egyptian darkness' (cf. Exod. 10. 21–3) is regarded as a symbol of spiritual darkness and of wickedness by both church writers and liturgical texts. Gregory of Nyssa allegorically interprets it as

'the darkness of wickedness', to which people 'are driven by their evil pursuits': *Moses* 11. 81 [73]. Cf. Eirmos: 'Having crossed the water...and escaped from the wickedness of Egypt' [*Triodion*, 478].

(108) *Hymn* 18. 133–222; see also a scholium to *Hymn* 18. 130 in *SC* 174. 85. Cf. the saying of Abba Markellos in John Moschos, *Meadow* 152 [3021 B]: 'Let us hurry to flee from bodily life, as Israel ran from Egyptian captivity.'

(111) *Eth*. 15. 61–73. The figure of Moses has been regarded as a symbol of the true mystic since Philo, and such an interpretation has become traditional in Christian theological thought: see Malherbe and Ferguson, 'Introduction', 5–6. The image of Moses does not occupy so prominent a place in Symeon's mysticism as in Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and *Corpus Areopagiticum*; nevertheless Symeon occasionally cites Moses as an example when speaking of mystical life.

(112) *Eth*. 15. 41–52. An interesting and rare example of the trichotomy of a human being in Symeon. The interpretation itself seems to be original: cf. Veniamin, *Transfiguration*, 243–4.

(113) *Eth*. 15. 28–31. The sinful woman is a traditional example of repentance in patristic usage. Cf. Amphilochius of Iconium, *Woman* 4. 6. 170–216 [*Opera*, 114–16]. Cf. also the *Great Canon* by Andrew of Crete, Canticle Eight: 'As precious ointment, O Saviour, I empty on Thine head the alabaster box of my tears' [*Triodion*, 408].

(115) *Eth*. 2. 1. 44–6. Cf. the *Great Canon* by Andrew of Crete, Canticle Nine: 'Be not overcome by despair, O my soul; for thou hast heard of the faith of woman of Canaan...Cry out from the depth of thy heart...as she once cried to Christ' [*Triodion*, 413].

(116) *Eth*. 2. 1. 46–51. Cf. the similar interpretation in Gregory Nazianzen, *Poes. hist*. 12[1182 A].

(118) Cf. the description of the parts of the human body in *Hymn* 15. 141–74. Cf. also an interesting, though indirect, parallel from Syriac tradition: an explanation of the mystical meaning of all members of Christ's body in an anonymous treatise (of uncertain date): Graffin, 'Explication', 263–77.

(121) This expression occurs in Origen, *Horn. Jerem*. 18. 5. 22 [156]; Gregory of Nyssa, *Moses*, ii [74], and other authors; but Symeon probably alludes to the following liturgical text: 'Seeing the sea of life which is ruffled by the gale of temptations, I hasten to your quiet harbour' [*Eirmologion*, 161].

(123) Cf. the *Canon of Pascha* by John of Damascus, Ode Three: 'Come, let us drink a new drink, not one marvellously brought forth from a barren rock, but the Source of incorruption, which springeth forth from the grave of Christ...' [*Pentecostarion*, 29].

(124) Cf. the Theotokion from the *Canon* by Theodore the Studite: 'In days of old Moses saw thy mystery prefigured in the Bush, O hallowed Virgin: just as the flame did not consume it, so the fire of the Godhead has not consumed Thy womb' [*Triodion*, 339]. The interpretation is derived from Gregory of Nyssa, *Moses*, ii [39].

(125) Cf. the *Canon of Pascha* by John of Damascus, Ode One: 'pascha, the Lord's Pascha; for Christ God hath brought us from death unto life, and from earth unto Heaven as we sing the triumphal hymn' [*Pentecostarion*, 28]. The genre of canon assumes nine odes, the first of which is traditionally devoted to the crossing of the Red Sea.

(126) See Lundberg, *Typologie*, 116–45; Daniélou, *Bible*, 86–98.

(129) Gregory of Nyssa, following Origen, gives the third interpretation of the manna, which is understood by him as the Word of God: 'This bread, then, that does not come from the earth is the Word', *Moses*, ii [77] Cf. Daniélou, *Bible*, 148–51.

(130) Cf. the *Canon to the Theotokos* by Joseph the Hymnographer, Ode Seven: 'Hail...mystical staff that has blossomed with the unfading flower' [*Triodion*, 437].

(133) Cf. the patristic doctrine of Christ's 'impassible passion': Origen, *Comm. Mat*. 10. 23 [33]; Methodios, *Porphyr*. 2 [505]; Cyril of Alexandria, *Ep*. 4. 45 [48 A].

(134) *Hymn* 19. 140–6.

(142) Rufinus, *Hist. Mon.* Ix. 2. 7 [313].

(1) One arrives at this figure by adding some three years of Symeon's monastic life before ordination to forty-eight years of his priesthood.

(2) Leloir, *Désert*, 173.

(3) On the three types of monasticism see Deseille, *Lumirère*, 21–6. Cf. John Klimakos, *Ladder* 1 [641]. The word 'scetiot' is an adjective from Scete, or Skiti (Greek *Σκήτη*)—initially the name of the monastic centre in the Egyptian desert (now Wâdi-el-Natrun); later it became a common noun signifying semi-eremitical monasticism.

(4) Taft, *Hours*, 60.

(8) According to this theory, the Septenary is formed by vespers, compline, midnight office, matins (with the first hour), third, sixth, and ninth hours. The Liturgy is not included in the number of seven both because it is not a daily office, and because, being the eighth office, it symbolizes 'the age to come'. The Septenary was not a rejection of the principle of continuous prayer, as some scholars have suggested; on the contrary, the two principles coexisted in Egyptian monasticism: cf. the thesis of Mensbrugge in 'Prayer-Time', 453, and the objections of Veilleux in *Liturgie*, 281–2. Cf. the story from the *Apophthegmata*, Epiphanios 3 [164 B–C]: Epiphanios of Salamis was told by the abbot of one Palestinian monastery that the monks there diligently recited Terce, Sext, and None. 'You obviously neglect the other hours of the day', he answered, 'for the true monk must have prayer and psalmody in his heart without ceasing.'

(13) *Τροπάριον*—initially (4th century ?) a short prayer written in poetic prose and inserted after each verse of the psalm; in later Byzantine use (6th–9th centuries) existed separately from psalms. *κανών* consists of nine canticles (odes), each of which includes several *Τροπάρτα*: cf. Wellesz, *History*, 171, 198.

(14) Christ and Paranikas, *Anthologia*, XXIX–XXX. Cf. the following story in the *Gerontikon*: The disciple came to the elder complaining that, though he 'recited the *canon* and the hours, according to the *Octoichos*,' he could not acquire true contrition of soul. The elder answered: 'This is why the contrition and mourning escape you. Remember how the great Fathers who lived in solitude and without prescribed tunes and *troparia*, but with some psalms only, shone in the world as true stars. Like that were Abba Paul the Simple, Abba Pamvo, Abba Apollo, and other divine Fathers, who raised the dead and cast out devils...and they did so neither by songs, nor by *troparia* and tones [*οὐκ ἐν ᾄσμασι καὶ τροπαρίις και ἤχοις*], but by prayer with a contrite soul and by fasting...'; *Εὐεργετινός* 11. 5. 3 [2. 169]. Canons came into use in Byzantine liturgical worship in 7th-9th centuries. This is why the episode with Pamvo should not be dated earlier than the 7th century (unless the story itself derives from the earlier period and the term 'canon' is a later interpolation).

(15) Wellesz, *History*, 165.

(16) In modern scholarship it is suggested that the *Hypotyposis* was compiled by Theodore's followers after his death: see Leroy, 'Réforme', 208–9; Taft, 'Athos', 183. On its two versions see Bertoniere, *Vigil*, 165–6.

(17) Cf. *Hyptyposis*: Tn the liturgy we do not sing "Bless the Lord, O my soul" [Ps. 102/103], but what is traditional for the Great Church'; see Dmitriyevsky, *Opisanie* i. 1. 227. In the version of *PG 99* this remark is absent. We must note that the version published by Dmitriyevsky is based on more ancient manuscripts than is that of *PG* and contains some passages omitted in *PG*.

(18) See Ware, 'Meaning' [*Triodion*, 40–2].

(19) Schmemann, *Introduction*, 211. Generally, the Studite office was a hybrid of the office of the Palestinian Lavra of St. Savvas with material from the office of the Great Church in Constantinople: see Taft, 'Athos', 182.

(20) For the office of the Great Church the reconstruction by J. Mateos, *Typicon*, pp. xxii-xxiii, is used. For the

Studite Typika see, for example, the description of the offices on 1 and 2 September in the Typikon of the Monastery 'Evergetidos': Dmitriyevsky, *Opisanie* i. 1. 256–9.

(22) *Προκειμενον* (from *πρόκειμαι*—'to lie before', 'to prelude') is a short verse usually taken from Psalms and preceding the reading of Scripture.

(25) *κάθισμα* (from *καθιζω*), 'to sit down')—a part of the Psalter. In Byzantine use the Psalter was divided into twenty parts; three *καθίσματα* were normally read in the monastic office every day.

(26) The *readings* (*ἀναγνὼσεις*) after each *kathisma* normally included early patristic writings, for example, by Ephrem the Syrian, Gregory Nazianzen, and others.

(27) The *readings* after the third and the sixth odes of the *canon* were usually devoted to the commemorated saint.

(28) *Παννυχὶς* (literally, 'all-night') is not mentioned in the *Hypotyposis* by Theodore, but is mentioned in the *Diatyposis* (*Διατύπωσις*) by Athanasios the Athonite: Dmitriyevsky, *Opisanie* i. 1. 147; Uspensky, 'Chin', 27. This office is nothing else but *μεσονυκτικόν* (office at cockcrow), and must not be confused with the all-night vigil, which existed in the Palestinian monasteries, but was not characteristic for the Studite tradition: cf. Dmitriyevsky, *Opisanie* i. 1. cxxix.

(31) The expression 'went out to the *κάθισμα* of the cell' (*Vie* 26. 19–20) may be understood as sitting on a chair (*κάθισμα*) outside the cell and having a rest. Another explanation is that Symeon went to church to attend the office of the hours (e.g. *τριτοεκιτ* which included selected psalms or even *κάθισμα*, if it was Lent); this is how I. Hausherr understands this passage: see *Mystique*, 37 (n. 4). It seems, however, that the first explanation is more probable.

(35) *Cat*. 26. 20–67. *Στιχολογὶα*—reading of the Psalter divided into *κάθίσματα*. Concerning *ἀνάγνωσις* (which could be either from Scripture or from ascetic literature), as well as concerning *ἑξάψαλμος* and *τροπάριος* see above. See also Krivochéine, *SC* 113. 70–5.

(36) In the Studite use the third and sixth hours were sometimes joined together into one office, *τριτοέκτι*. This office was also performed in the Great Church during Lent: cf. Mateos, *Typicon*, p. xxiv.

(40) As early as in the fourth century Basil the Great associates midnight office with Psalm 118/119: *Long Rules* 37. 5 [1016B]. Cf. Lamb, *Psalms*, 57.

(46) Cf. Krivochéine, *Light*, 89.

(52) For example, John Klimakos devoted the whole of ch. 7 of his 'Ladder' to the 'joy-making mourning': he speaks of mourning before lying down in bed and during meals [805 AB], every evening [805 B], 'in cities and crowds' [816 C], 'in any place' [804 D] and of 'unceasing mourning' [816 D]; but not specially of tears in church during offices.

(55) *Cat*. 30. 210–13. Cf. the instructions to the *canonarch* in Theodore the Studite's *Gr. Cat*. 1. 3. 3 and *Iamb*. 10.

(57) See *Cat*. 22. 278; *Hymn* 58. 355. Cf. Krivochéine, *Light*, 86–90. On *Κρυπτὴ μελέτὴ* see Hausherr, *Noms*, 167–75.

(59) Veilleux, *Liturgie*, 228–35.

(60) Herding, *Antonius*, 80 ff.

(61) *Meadow*, chs. 4, 28, 79, 86, 106, 161, 177. John Moschos also mentions the custom, which existed in Antioch, of partaking once a year, on Holy Thursday: see ch. 79. It seems, the custom was long established: two centuries before John Chrysostom reproached those Antiochians who received Communion only once a year: *Hom. I Tim*. 5. 3 [529–30].

(62) Cyprian of Carthage, *Prayer* 18 [280]; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystag*. 5. 15 [162].

(63) *Ep*. 93 [203–4]. When saying 'we partake four times a week', Basil might meanboth himself and the people of

Cappadocia (together with him).

(66) Cf. Salaville, 'Messe', 282–98.

(73) Literally 'blessing', i.e. the blessed bread, otherwise known in Byzantine usage as *ἀντίδωρον*, which means 'instead of the holy gifts'. It was a simple bread and was not regarded as 'Communion...in the form of blessed bread', as D. Krausmüller thinks: see 'Sroudion', 71.

(74) *Hyp.* 27 [*PG* 99,1713 B]. Originally, the *τυπικὰ* was a kind of non-eucharistic office of Communion (more modest than the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts). In a later usage this office was inserted into the eucharistic Liturgy: see Mateos, 'Horologion', 66–8. In the development of the *τυπικὰ* there was also an intermediate stage when the office was already separated from Communion but not yet inserted in the eucharistic Liturgy: ibid. 68. The Studite *Hypotyposis* appears to reflect this stage.

(75) Dmitriyevsky, *Opisanie* i. 1. 248. The *Diatyposis* was written by Athanasios some time before his death (no later than the first years of the eleventh century): see Taft, 'Athos', 183 (with bibliography on the question). Since the *Diatyposis* was based on the *Hypotyposis* of Theodore the Studite, it serves as important evidence for Studite liturgical practice.

(76) Cf. Herman, 'Kommunion', 210 ff.

(87) Cf. Krivochéine, *Light*, 121.

(99) His confidence in the real presence of Christ in the consecrated gifts is confirmed by the following passage: 'Where the bread is placed and the wine is poured in the name of Your flesh and Your blood, O Word, You are there Yourself...and they really become Your body and Your blood through the coming of the Holy Spirit...'; *Hymn* 14. 55–9.

(101) The two Symeons were not the only Byzantine authors who linked tears and Communion. We can recall at least one parallel from the later theologian, Theognostos: 'Having been made whiter than snow by the outpourings of tears, touch the holy gifts...'; *Chapt.* 18 [258]. Cf. also the *Canon for Holy Communion*, Ode Three: 'Give me, O Christ, the drops of tears, which purify the impurity of my heart...so that I may come to the Communion of Thy divine gifts' [*Horologion*, 495].

(103) Cf. Basil, *Sh. Rules* 16 [1092 D]. Cf. also Chryssavgis, *Ascent*, 129–30; Hausherr, *Penthos*, 54; Leloir, 'Désert', 215–19; Sylvia Mary, 'Tears', 432. See also the discussion of tears in Symeon in chapter 10.

(110) Krivochéine, *Light*, 118–19.

(112) Ode Nine [*Horologion*, 498]. This *Canon* was probably written after Symeon's death. Cf. the remarks in the Conclusion concerning the influence of Symeon on the eucharistic piety of the Orthodox Church. Cf. also Theognostos, *Chapt.* 70 [269]: 'Without purification of yourself do not dare to touch the holy mysteries, so as not to be burned, like hay, by divine fire, and not to be destroyed, like melted wax [cf. Ps. 67/68: 2]'.

(123) The use of the Pauline term *σύσσωμος* (cf. Eph. 3. 6) became traditional for eucharistic texts of the Fathers. See quotations from Cyril of Jerusalem and John Chrysostom below.

(126) *Hymn Virg.* 37. 2 [133]. On Ephrem's 'eucharistic realism' see Yousif, *Euch-aristie*, 288–94.

(135) On the liturgical symbolism of Dionysios see Bornert, *Commentaires*, 169–78 (esp.170–3).

(137) *Sh. Cat.* 42. The Studite *Hypotyposis* 29 [*PG* 99. 1716 A] specially mentions 'the days where there is a commemoration of a saint'. However, it does not necessarily mean that there were days without the commemoration of saints; the question in *Hyp.* 29 is, most probably, about the so-called 'great saints', the commemoration of whom was regarded as a feast.

(139) If they mention feasts, they often do so in the same way as they speak of the '*troparia* and *canons*' (see above).

Paul of Evergetis devotes one chapter of his anthology of monastic texts to the celebration of feasts: the main theme of the collection of passages from the *Gerontikon* ('Sayings of Elders') is the necessity of abstinence for monks on feast days. We recognize the traditional ironic intonation: 'For laymen and the rich, but not for monks, it is allowed to fast forty days, that is, in Great Lent, and to relax and rest fifty days, that is, during Pentecost. In the same way to sing *troparia* and *canons*, and to vocalize tones is fitting for priests in the world and for other people [but not for monks]': *Εὐεργετινὸς* 19. 5 [2. 249].

(157) I take very much the opposite point of view to the statement by some scholars that the 'direct, mystical communication with God', which was preached by Symeon and the later Hesychasts, 'was in apparent contradiction to Orthodox worship, which was associated with the sacraments of the Church and the veneration of icons': Kazhdan and Constable, *Power*, 91. On the contrary, Orthodox worship in general and the sacrament of the Eucharist in particular formed the foundation of Symeon's mysticism, along with the sacrament of Baptism (see chapter 9). As to the veneration of icons, it also constituted an integral part of Symeon's mysticism: cf. his description of the mystical vision of light which took place immediately after he venerated an icon of the Holy Virgin (*Euch*. 2. 265–9); cf. also Symeon's public defence of the veneration of the icon of Symeon the Studite described by Nikitas in *Vie* 87. 21–93. II (see the quotations in chapter 6).

(158) On this interdependence see Schmemann, *Tradition*, 49–88.

(1) Turner, *Fatherhood*, 65.

(23) The monks in Egypt always worked without ceasing to practise meditation, according to John Cassian, *Inst*. 3. 2 [34]. Cf. the recommendation in *Verba seniorum* vii. 24 [897 C]: *labora manibus tuis et ora Deum incessanter* ('work with your hands and pray to God without ceasing'); cf. *Apophthegm*., Loukios [253 BC]. Cf. Guillaumont, *Origines*, 125–6.

(28) The service of the twelve psalms is one of the most ancient elements of monastic office; it existed in Egyptian monasteries already in 4th–5th centuries: see John Cassian, *Inst*. 2. 4–6 [20–2]. For Psalm 118/119 (*Μακάριοι ἄμωμοι ἐν ὁδῷ*) as part of the midnight office see chapter 3.

(39) Dmitriyevsky, *Opisanie* i. 1. 673; also 745 ff.; cf. Hausherr, *Direction*, 107.

(55) Cf. John Klimakos, *Ladder* 22 [952 B]: 'Do not take any notice when [the demon] suggests that you should accept bishopric, abbacy, and professorship.' In this respect one passage from Nikitas Stithatos concerning Symeon's life in the Studite monastery is remarkable: '[Evil people] invited him to suppers, drink parties, chatting, and to that which they considered respectable. And what is this? Offices, bright cells, and ordinations'; *Vie* 17. 12–15. In accordance with tradition and in contrast with the Studite, Nikitas counts the promise of ordination among monastic temptations, which were, however, successfully conquered by Symeon.

(56) *Ladder* 1 [632 A], title: *περὶ ἀποταγῆς βίου—literally, 'on renunciation of life'*. Cf. Dorotheos, *Disc*. 1, title [146].

(57) Isaac the Syrian, *Horn*. 30 [131] = *Syr. Hom*. 2 [18].

(62) Mark of Egypt 3 [296 BC].

(77) *Verba seniorum* 130 [785 CD]; cf. *Apophthegm*., Anthony 24 [84 B]; cf. *Egypt. Solit*. 67[395].

(80) *Apophthegm*., Poimin 19 [325 D]. Cf. Basil, *Asc. Disc*. (40). 4 [877 A]: wine as βδελυκτός ('vile') for monks.

(81) Makarios of Egypt 10 [268 AB]; cf. Chitty, *Desert*, 44.

(83) *Asc*. 22. The three fasts mentioned are Great Lent (*ἡ μεγάλη τεσσακοστή*, seven weeks before Easter), Advent (forty days before Christmas), and the Fast of saints Peter and Paul (several days or weeks before their feast day, 29 June).

(84) Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 84–5.

(87) Greek *ἰδιώτης*.

(89) *Asc.*27. This recommendation together with the advice to promise ordination to a young monk may suggest that the Studite admitted lies as a means for improving the situation in several circumstances. In connection with this it is not useless to quote here John Klimakos' quite paradoxical saying: 'When we are completely cleansed of lying, then we can occasionally resort to it, though with fear'; *Ladder* 12 [856 C].

(99) Cf. his *Ep.* 1. Cf. also the discussion in chapter 9 (section on the church hierarchy).

(101) See Holl, *Enthusiasmus*, 128–37; Krivochéine, *Light*, 131–40; Barringer, *Penance, passim*.

(112) *Cap.* 3. 98. One wonders what was the reason for A. Kazhdan to ignore this text and suggest that Symeon treated the idea of alms with scepticism: 'one may, or may not, be merciful: this does not bring man nearer to salvation'; 'Zamechaniya', 13; cf. idem, 'Symeon' [*ODByz* 3, 1987]; cf. Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change*, 91–2.

(113) Cf. *Vie* 9. 1–2. However, we have no evidence that Symeon ever became a beggar in the literal sense. On the contrary, Nikitas mentions some books, clothes, and 'other things' which belonged to Symeon: *Vie 97*. 13–21. Symeon was not Francis of Assisi, and his call to all people to become beggars, then, must not be understood literally.

(131) Cf. the image of the moon in *Hymn* 29. 9. It should be noted that the image of the moon occurs in Symeon very rarely: he definitely prefers to speak of the sun when describing the divine light. If Symeon the New Theologian speaks of a ray, the question is usually about an incomplete vision: e.g. in *Cat*. 22. 314–18, describing the second vision of the young George, he says that it was 'a small ray of that most sweet and divine light', which appeared to him 'in some dim fashion'. In *Hymn* 23. 244–9 he describes a partial vision of the divine light as follows: For it is the ray that I see, but the sun I do not see...Seeing the ray, I desire to see completely its Originator.' The Studite also refers to a ray when describing the first stage of the vision: he says that at the next stages the shining becomes brighter.

(141) Turner, *Fatherhood*, 65.

(1) The methodological division of patristic literature into theological, ascetical, and mystical does not correspond to how the Fathers would themselves regard their works: both Gregory 'the Theologian' and Mark 'the Ascetic', as well as the majority of other church Fathers, were in fact theologians, ascetics, and mystics at the same time. It is only modern scholarship that tends to classify Fathers according to the predominating themes of their writings.

(2) N. Wilson argues that a manuscript of 300 to 400 folia would have cost in the 9th century (i.e. one or two centuries before Symeon) about 15 to 20 nomismata: see his article in *Byzantine Books*, 3 ff. For comparison we can recall that in the 10th century the average annual salary of a Byzantine office employee was about 40 nomismata, and even a *protospatharios* earned only 72 nomismata a year: Mango, *Image*, p. vii, 38–9.

(6) For its description see Eleopoulos, *Βιβλιοθήκη*, 11–56.

(7) Vie 34. 19–20. When organizing a library, Symeon followed the tradition which derived from Theodore the Studite and his uncle Plato, as well as from early monasticism (see Chapter 1). There is an interesting parallel to Symeon in another 11th-century hegumen, Christodoulos of Patmos; the latter also organized a rich library in his monastery, having collected, copied, or bought many manuscripts: see Ware, 'Christodoulos', 32–3.

(12) Here and below the statistics are borrowed (as with biblical statistics in Chapter 2) from *SC* indices and from Turner, *Fatherhood*, 45–51.

(15) *SC* 104, 306–7 (n. 1). Cf. also Symeon's references to the *Apost. Const*, in his polemic with the Patriarch Sergios: *Vie* 83. 8–23.

(16) The influence of Gregory's theology on Symeon will be considered in later sections. Here it should be pointed out that Gregory was among the very few authors who exerted literary influence on Symeon. In particular, Symeon's 'Hymn 5' (Alphabet in Verses) is an imitation of Gregory's *Poes. moral.* 30 [908 A–910 A]: both are written with an

alphabetical acrostic. There is also a certain literary parallelism between Symeon's 'Beatitudes' in *Eth*. 10. 778–867 and Gregory's *Poes. moral*. 17 [781 A–786 A].

(17) Note the difference between Symeon and Theodore the Studite, for whom monastic writings by Basil the Great were his favourite reading: see L. Theod. Stud. 13 [128 C]. Theodore often refers to Basil the Great, and even regards himself as a 'defender of St. Basil's commandments': *Gr. Cat*. I. 38.

(18) Some parallels between the three authors listed and Symeon have been indicated by J. Fraigneau-Julien: see Sens, 44–56, 79–92, 171–81. Before this J. Hussey suggested that Symeon 'was especially influenced' by the writings of Maximos the Confessor: *Learning*, 202. W. Volker also indicated some traces of Maximos' influence on Symeon: *Praxis*, 266–7, 270–2. However, it would be difficult to find textual proofs of Symeon's dependence on Maximos. As to the Areopagite, the opinions of scholars concerning his influence on Symeon are different. Some scholars deny the possibilityof direct influence: see Holl, *Enthusiasmus*, 98; Bouyer, *Histoire*, 673, Krivocheine, 'Zealot', 117. Others are more positive concerning the Areopagite's influence on Symeon; in particular W. Volker expresses his disagreement with the conclusions of the above mentioned scholars, while recognizing that 'Symeon's attitude to the Areopagite is disputed': *Praxis*, 359–60 and 5. Recently a Hungarian scholar I. Perszel indicated many parallels between Symeon and Dionysios; in particular, in Symeon's *Theol*. 3. 155 ff. (cf. Div.*Names* 1. 3; ibid. 1. 6), *Cat*. 18. 433–9 (cf. *Div. Names* 1. 4), *Hymn* 23. 374 ff. (cf. *Div. Names* 3. 1), etc.: see 'Parallèles'. However, none of these parallels is direct, and so one may argue that Symeon was perhaps influenced not by the Areopagite himself, but rather by some characteristic expressions of the Areopagitic language, particularly those accumulated by the church office. On the links between the Areopagite, Symeon and Nikitas see also Golitzin, 'Hierarchy'.

(21) I. Hausherr argues that Nikitas' expression *Μάρκου καὶ Διαδόχου* can be understood as *Μάρκου τοῦ Διαδόχου* which would be a corruption of *Μάρκου τοῦ Ἀσκητη*: *Mystique*, 7 (n. 3). We, however, do not see any reason for such a suspicion, even though Symeon himself speaks only of 'the book by Mark the Monk *On the Spiritual Law*' in the parallel passage (*Cat*. 22. 34–5). The expression *Μάρκου τοῦ Διαδόχου*, which does occur in some manuscripts, refers to Diadochos as a successor of Mark, but not to Mark himself. Generally Diadochos was the closest spiritual author to Mark; the writings by Mark very often precede those by Diadochos in the manuscript tradition: see Ware, 'Marc, *Traités*', p. xl.

(23) Cf. the quotation from Longinos in *Eth*. 2. 7. 201–3; some allusions to sayings of Arsenios in *Cat*. 6. 71–118; the allusion to the apophthegm by 'our holy fathers' (presumably Anthony or Poimin) in *Cat*. 4. 456–8; cf. also *Cat*. 21. 31–2.

(24) This is in spite of the fact that the *Sh. Cat*. by Theodore the Studite were read in the Stoudion (and possibly in other dependent monasteries) three times a week during church services: see *L. Theod. Stud*. 36 [152 C].

(25) 'Symeon' [*LTK* 9, 1215 ff]. For the bibliography on 'Makarian Homilies' see Quasten, *Patrology* III, 165–6. I consider the *Homilies* which survived under the name of Makarios of Egypt (whoever their real author might be) as belonging to Orthodox tradition, whereas they are regarded by some scholars as a product of Messalian spirituality: see especially H. Dörries' early monograph *Symeon* (1941). In the opinion of A. Louth, the very fact that all known anti-Messalian lists (that is, by Theodoret of Cyr, Timothy of Constantinople, and John of Damascus) are based on the text of the 'Makarian Homilies' 'makes unavoidable the judgement that the "Homilies" are of Messalian provenance': see *Origins*, 115. Cf. the anti-Messalian list by John of Damascus, *Her*. 80 [42–3] with a commentary by B. Kotter, who indicates direct parallels with 'Makarian Homilies'. On the other hand, H. Dörries, who changed his view on Makarian origins after many years of study, in his later work (1978) suggests that 'Makarian Homilies' were taken over by the Messalians one generation after the life of their author, who was himself in fact an adversary of the Messalians, rejecting the main features of their doctrine, such as 'enthusiasm' and the claim of 'the perfect' on sinlessness: *Theologie*, 12–13; on tne rejection of Messalianism by Makarios see also Meyendorff, 'Messalianism'. Generally, I share the later theory of Dörries, as well as the opinion of W. Jaeger that 'Makarios interpreted those of his beliefs that scholars have compared with what little we know of the Messalian sect in a more spiritual sense, and did not take them from this heretical group but from some common monastic tradition': *Works*, 225. Cf. the opinion of C. Stewart, who suggests that it is impossible to know whether Makarios belonged to the Messalians: '*Working*', 235 ft. The Eastern patristic tradition finally integrated the Makarian heritage as wholly Orthodox. Isaac the Syrian even quoted Makarios *against* the Messalians: see *Sur. Hom*. 72 [495 and 500]. In this study I follow the traditional

attitude of the Eastern Church to Makarios and cite his writings among other patristic sources, regarding them 'as an authentic expression of Eastern Christian spirituality at its best': cf. Ware, 'Introductory Note' in *Philokalia* (English) 3. 283.

(26) On the attribution of the letter see Staats, 'Macarius, *Epistola*', 11 ff. (with the full bibliography of the question on pp. 79–81).

(28) *Praxis*, 357. Cf. Hatzopoulos, *Two Outstanding Cases*, 49.

(30) I had a chance to examine the manuscript *Coisl*. 268, which belongs to the period of the Hesychast renaissance (13th-14th centuries), where the homilies of Isaac the Syrian are supplied with patristic parallels—among them there are many from Symeon: cf., for example, ff. 7; 9v.; 10v. (Ps.-Symeon); 25v.; 45. For the bibliography on Isaac the Syrian see, in particular, Alfeyev, *Isaac*. On Isaac's general background see also Miller, 'Epilogue'; idem, 'Introduction'; Khalifé-Hachem, 'Isaac'; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism III*, 336–49.

(31) Cf. Krivocheine, 'Zealot', 117–18. Cf. also the remark by I. Hausherr: 'The New Theologian must surely have read Isaac the Syrian'; *Penthos*, 133. Hausherr even intended to undertake a special study on the connection between Isaac and 'the school of the New Theologian': ibid. 195. Unfortunately, the scholar did not undertake it.

(34) Another important 11th-century anthology, parallel to that of *Evergetinos*, is the *Interpretations of the Lord's Commandments* by Nikon of the Black Mountain: see Ware, 'Synagoge', 327 ff.

(37) Turner, *Fatherhood*, 51.

(43) We see the difference in approach between Symeon and Athanasios, who puts this episode at an early point in the 'Life' (ch. 10), regarding subsequent events as more important. Another difference is that Athanasios speaks of an unconscious presence of Christ, whereas Symeon always insists that this presence must be conscious.

(44) *L. Anth*. 10 [162–4]. Cf. a similar description of the appearance of the light in *Apophthegmata*, Makarios of Egypt 33 [276 D]: 'the roof opened and the light appeared as in the day'.

(47) *Cat*. 6. 71–89. Symeon retells here the 'Life of Arsenios' written by Theodore the Studite [*PG 99*. 849–82].

(48) *Cat*. 6. 89–95. Cf. the assertion by the 8th-century Syriac writer Joseph Hazzaya that Arsenios saw the divine light: 'The blessed abba Arsenios [did not speak with his visitors]...because his spirit rejoiced...in that holy light which appeared to him...The inner wonder stopped his tongue and prevented him from speaking'; *Monast*. 111 [384–7].

(49) *Cat*. 6. 95–8. As B. Krivocheine argues, Symeon refers here to the *Apophthegmata*, Arsenios 10 [89 c]: 'If we search for God, He will appear to us; and if we catch Him, He will remain with us'; see *SC* 104. 20–1 (n. 4). However, Symeon might have implied a collection of chapters which is now lost.

(54) *Cat*. 5. 637–44. The names of Patriarchs are not put in chronological order: after John Chrysostom (354–07) there are John the Almsgiver (Patriarch of Alexandria, +609); Gregory the Theologian (330–90); Ignatios (Patriarch of Constantinople in 847–58 and 867–77); Tarasios (Patriarch of Constantinople in 784–806); Methodios (Patriarch of Constantinople in 843–7). The names of Metropolitans are also given in a rather spontaneous order: Basil the Great (+379); Gregory of Nyssa (+394); Gregory the Wonderworker (+270); Ambrose of Milan (+397); Nicholas of Myra (4th century?). As B. Krivochéine points out, the presence of Ignatios and the absence of Photios in Symeon's list is significant: 'like the majority of monks of his epoch, and particularly the Studites, Symeon seems to have more sympathy for him than for Photios, whom he does not mention'; *SC 96*. 433 (n. 1). The presence of Ambrose of Milan indicates that this Western saint was known and venerated in the East in the time of Symeon.

(58) Cf. Krivochéine, 'Zapiska', 94–8.

(63) *Cat*. 29. *6–67*. Such nostalgia for 'the days of the Fathers' is not a new phenomenon in the monasticism of the time of Symeon: it is a leitmotiv of *the Apophthegmata*; cf. Ischirionos [241 D–244 A]; John Kolovos 14 [208 CD];

Poimin 166 [361 C]; Elijah 2 [184 AB] and 8 [185 AB].

(65) *Cat*. 29. 68–98. In this list of saints the presence of Stephen the Younger is worth mentioning: he was martyred in 764 under Constantine V Copronymos for the veneration of icons, and so was relatively recent for Symeon, who was born two centuries after him. The 'Life of Stephen' (see the text in *PG* 100. 1067–1186) is, according to I. Ševčenko, 'a jewel of the hagiography of the iconoclastic period'; written in 806, it soon achieved great popularity in Byzantium: see 'Hagiography', 115.

(69) Florovsky, *Viz*. *Otcy*, 250. Cf. the words of the Patriarch Tarasios and Theodore the Studite allegedly spoken to the emperor Leo the Armenian: 'The rejection of God's icon leads...to the rejection of the Son of God Himself, Who...became man as we are and revealed to us the characteristics of His divine image'; *L*. *Theod*. *Stud*. 64 [173 B].

(70) Florovsky, *Vyz*. *Otcy*, 252; cf. also Ware, *Church*, 32–4.

(72) In fact, the veneration of saints was also at issue during the iconoclastic controversy, though it was then a minor and supplementary question: see Martin, *Controversy*, 52 and 190. John of Damascus argued against those who rejected the veneration of saints as follows: 'You are not waging war against images, but against the saints themselves...Scripture calls the saints gods [Ps. 82: 1]...The saints during their earthly lives were filled with the Holy Spirit, and when they fulfilled their course, the grace of the Holy Spirit does not depart from their souls or their bodies in the tombs, or from their likeness and holy images, not by the nature of these things, but by grace and power'; *Imag*. I. 19 [94–5] (text and glossa). It is not surprising that Symeon would refer to the discourses 'On Images' by John of Damascus in defence of his own practice (see below).

(2) Cf. :'you imply that there was a time when God was alone, when the Son was not'; *Theol*. 1. 57–8 (a clear allusion to the 4th-century Arian phraseology).

(3) V. Grumel refers to some important documents, written at this time by Sergios, such as: the letters to the Pope concerning the question *of Filioque*, the act of excommunication of the Pope, and the encyclical letters to other Eastern patriarchs concerning this excommunication: *Regestes*, i. 1. 240–2. It is significant that there is no trace of anti-Latin polemic in any of Symeon the New Theologian's writings: he was certainly more interested in struggle against his direct opponents inside the Eastern Church rather than in arguments with the Westerners. In this Nikitas Stithatos was a contrast to Symeon, since he was personally involved in anti-Latin polemic around 1054: cf. Demetrakopoulos, *Bibliotheca*, *ε'–η'*, 18–36.

(4) On this polemic see Darrouzès, 'Documents', 89–102; Garsoian, 'Nil'.

(5) Cf., for example, the discussion of John 14: 28 in Symeon's 'Theological Discourses' and in Euthymios of Paphlagonia's 'Oration I Against Armenians' [PG 132. 1161 D-1164 D] (for the authorship of Euthymios see V. Grumel, 'Invectives').

(14) *Disc*. 29. 3. 18. 21–5 [216]. This interpretation derives from Irenaeus: see *Her*. 2. 28. 8. As S. Sakkos indicates, it is therefore the most ancient interpretation: *Patir*, i. 98. However, Gregory regards Basil's interpretation as equally possible: see *Disc*. 30. 7. 5–6 [240], where he claims that 'the Father is greater than the Son because of His being the "cause" [of the Son], but equal [to Him] by nature'.

(15) There are only four fragments of this homily which survived in Greek: see *Opera*, 227–30. However, the Syriac version contains almost entire text: see 'My Father' [*Muséon* 43. 317–64].

(18) *Fragm*. 11. 2 [228]. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, 'Godhead' [565 A], which is also mostly devoted to the discussion of John 14: 28: 'When the Word looks at His human nature, He confesses that what is unseen is greater than what is seen in flesh; but when He raises His mind to the divine, He does not any more give a comparison and juxtaposition of the "greater" and "less"; instead of this, He preaches the oneness: "I and My Father are one" [John 10: 30]'.

(22) Cf. Anastasios of Sinai, 'Guide' x. 1.2. 128–31 [154]; 'Sermons' IV. 2. 131–7 [94]. Cf. the interpretation with reference to Christ's human nature in Cyril of Alexandria, *Horn*. *John* 7 [245–6]; *Thesaurus* 9 [117 BC]. Cf. also similar interpretation in Maximos the Confessor, *Marin*. 1 [217 CD].

(23) Petit, 'Documents', 476. J. Meyendorff suggests that the controversy may have been originated by the intellectual contacts with the West: *Christ*, 200. On the connection between the Council of 1166 and the Westerners see Classen, 'Konzil'.

(24) See the edict of Emperor Manuel in *PG* 133. 773–81; the acts of the councils of 1166–70 in Petit, 'Documents', 479–93 and Sakkos, *Patir*, ii. 120–86; a long passage in Gouillard, *Synodikon*, 472–571 [75–81].

(26) The interpretation with reference to the flesh of Christ is in fact a subdivision of the 'human' interpretation, and occurs in Amphilochios (see above); cf. also Gregory of Nyssa, *Ar.-Savel*. [82] and other authors.

(27) Cf. Photios, *Ep*. 176 [18–25]; Hilary of Poitiers, *Trinity* 9. 51 [429]. See also Sakkos, *Patir*, i. 116–26.

(28) Cf. Epiphanios of Salamis, *Anchor* 17 [26]; cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus* 11 [152 A].

(29) Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc*. 30. 5. 26 [234].

(30) See Gouillard, *Synodikon* 482–7 [75] and 519–21 [79].

(33) See Lampe, *PGL*, 528. Athanasios opposes Arios, who 'restricts the term Word to a conceptual sense' (*κατ' ἐπίνοιαν λέγει τόν λόγον*), to Dionysios, who calls Christ true God 'by nature' (*φύσει*);*Dionys*. 24 [516 B]. Gregory Nazianzen uses this expression when saying that the names we give to God differ in accord with the sense (*ἐπίνοιαν*) of discussion: *Disc*. 29. 13. 18–19 [204]. Leontios of Byzantium, arguing against the Monophysites, says that 'the humanity [of Christ]...is separated from His divinity in thought and not in reality [*ἐπίνοίᾳ ν καὶ οὐκ ἐνεργείᾳ*]': *Sever*. [1973 C]. In all these cases the term *κατ ἐπίνοιαν* ('by thought') serves as an antonym of *κατά φύσιν* ('by nature') or *κατ' ἐνέργειαν* ('in reality', 'in practice').

(35) Petit,'Documents', 481.

(44) Quoted by Hippolytos, *Her*. 9. 10. 11 [244–5].

(54) Cf. Neyrand, *SC* 174. 155 (n. 2)

(6) *Disc*. 2. 39. 3–6 [140]. For the fuller exposition of the theme of the true theologian in Gregory see Winslow, *Dynamics*, 23–43.

(8) *Theol*. 2. 35–43. Cf. Basil the Great, *Ep*. 235. 2. 13–31 [45–6].

(12) Cf., amongst others, Justin, *Apol*. 2. 6; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom*. 5.81. 2–5, 82. 4; Origen, *Princ*. 4. 3. 14; Basil the Great, *Evnom*. 1. 10; John Chrysostom, *Incomprehens*. The last writing was explicitly known to Symeon, who alludes to it seven times in his *Hymns* 19; 21; 29–31: see Turner, *Fatherhood*, 50.

(15) Cf. Winslow, *Dynamics*, 28–9.

(19) For the exposition of Symeon's treatment of the theme of the incomprehensibility of God see also Krivochéine, *Lighti* 185–98 ('The Unknowable God Made Manifest').

(23) *Hymn* 23. 283–94; *Theol*. 2. 263–73. Cf. the comparison of God with a boundless sea in Maximos the Confessor, *Love* 4. 1 [193].

(30) For the patristic background of Symeon's teaching on the contemplation of 'the principles of creation', i.e. comprehension of God through contemplation of the visible world, see Volker, *Praxis*, 313–15.

(32) Ware, *Church*, 68. This approach will be discussed once again in Chapter 10 (section on the vision of God). On Palamism and its distinction between God's essence and energies see Meyendorff, *Study*, 202–27; Lossky, *Myst. Theol*., 67–90; Deseille, 'Connaissance', 4; Pelikan, *Spirit*, 269–70; Ware, *Church*, 67–9. For the modern scholarly criticism of Palamism see Ivanka, *Plato*, 374–421.

(36) Symeon discusses, for example, whether the term 'essence' (*οὐσία*) is applicable to God Who is totally beyond

essence: *Hymn* 47. 37–42. The essence of God is, according to Symeon, 'super-essential' (*οὐσία ὑπερούσιος*): *Hymn* 31. 6–14. On the other hand, once Symeon claims that he sees God in His very nature (*φύσις*), cf. *Hymn* 52. 52; elsewhere he says that through the contemplation of God, his own substance is mixed with God's essence: *Hymn* 7. 25–7. However, as B. Krivochéine suggests, the inconsistency in the usage of certain terms does not mean, as far as Symeon's teaching on the divine essence and energies is concerned, that we are dealing with a real contradiction. 'Most of his "contradictions" may be explained by the paradoxical and intimate nature of Christian mystery, which is so difficult, if not impossible, to express in logical, consistent language, especially if this mystery is approached in a concrete, existential fashion, as in the case with Symeon': *Light*, 198; cf. 'Essence', 168–70. We must also take into account that the controversy concerning the distinction between God's nature and energies took place in Byzantium three centuries after Symeon, who was not engaged in any specific argument about this matter, and so did not need to be so precise.

(39) See Alfeyev, *Zhizn*, 247–55. The theory of the divine names appeared in a quite developed form in all three Cappadocians. Apart from them, another great writer of the 4th century, Ephrem the Syrian, expressed the same theory in his own way: see Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 60–6 and 146–7. On the possible Syrian background of the Dionysian theory of the divine names see also Louth, *Denys*, 78–81.

(44) Gregory in *Disc.* 30. 18. 1–30, 31 (the names of Christ) and Dionysios in *Div. Names* 1. 6–13. 3 (the names of God).

(47) *Myst.Prayer* 4–14. This text is inscribed (possibly, by Nikitas) as 'The Prayer to the Holy Spirit'; and the majority of scholars, including B. Krivochéine (see *Light*, 274–5), accept this attribution. However, the text itself ends with a doxology to the Holy Trinity, and there are some expressions which are applicable to Christ rather than to the Holy Spirit ('seeing You', 'eating You', 'drinking You', in lines 48–50, which usually relate in Symeon to the mystical vision of Christ or to the Eucharist). One may therefore think that the prayer as a whole is addressed to the Holy Trinity. Some expressions, however, relate to one of the three Hypostases: for example, 'the right hand of the Sovereign' definitely relates either to the Holy Spirit or to the Son, but not to the Father.

(50) Cf. B. Krivochéine's observations concerning the term *ὁ ἀνυπερήφανος Θεός* ('the God without pride') in *"Ανυπεήφανος,'* 485 ff.

(54) Cf. the note of J. Koder in *SC* 156, 169.

(55) Cf. the *Canon of Pascha* by John of Damascus: 'Come, let us drink a new drink...' [*Pentecostarion*, 29].

(58) His list of Christ's names is as follows: Son, the Only-begotten, Word, Wisdom, Power, Truth, Image, Light, Life, Truth, Sanctification, Redemption, Resurrection, Man, the Son of Man, Christ, Way, Door, Shepherd, Sheep, Lamb, High Priest, Melchizedek, the King of Salem, Peace, the King of Righteousness; *Disc.* 30. 20. 1–21. 31 [266–74].

(64) Cf. Pelikan, *Spirit*, 258–9. For the patristic conception of apophatic theology see Hochstaffl, *Theologie*, 82–155; Gendle, *Approach*, 245–476.

(66) Turner, *Darkness*, 34.

(69) Alfeyev, *Tainstvo*, 33. This classification of ours does not pretend to be exhaustive. One may regard terms with both superlative and negative prefixes (*ὑπεράῤῥητος*, super-unknowable; *ὑπεράῤῥητος*, super-unspeakable) as belonging to two separate categories. On the other hand, one may reduce our third and fourth categories to one, joining paradoxical assertions and oxymorons into one group.

(70) We find a difference between the Areopagite and Gregory Nazianzen in their attitude to apophatic theology. Both accept apophaticism as a possible way to make cataphatic theological statements balanced, and both widely use apophatic terminology. However, Dionysios stresses the theoretical superiority of apophatic theology, which is defined as an ascent from the lower to the higher, whereas cataphaticism is a descent from the higher to the lower: see *Myst. Theol.* 2 [145]. Gregory, on the contrary, insists that cataphaticism is more practical: 'it is much easier and shorter to express the matter by saying what it is, rather than to show what it is by saying what it is not'; *Disc.* 28. 9. 30–2 [118–20]. See Alfeyev, *Zhizn*, 227–9.

(76) Cf. Fraigneau-Julien, *Sens*, 100 ff.

(80) *Myst. Prayer* 10; 48;*Hymn* 22. 60. Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Ped*. 1. 9 [140]; Gregory of Nyssa, *Prayer* 2 [23].

(82) Accordingly *Hymn* 1. 6; *Hymn* 4. 41;*Myst. Prayer* 5;*Hymn* 23. 5. These four terms are equivalent of Dionysian ἀῤῥητος (inexpressible), which is also used by Symeon: *Hymn* 1. 6; 20. 242; 36. 59.

(106) Cf., for example, 1 John 1:5. For the analysis of the Johannine concept of God as light see Dodd, *Gospel*, 201–6, 345–61. For the patristic doctrine of God as light (especially that of Origen and Athanasios) see Pelikan, *Light*, 21–36.

(109) Moreschini, *SC* 356. 63; idem, 'Luce', 53 5–42. For a fuller account of this theme in Gregory see Alfeyev, *Zhizn*, 3 5 5–62.

(110) Turner, *Fatherhood*, 47.

(114) Cf. Maximos the Conferssor, *Quest*. 8. 15–18 [77]. 'God and the Father is light in the light, that is, of the Son and the Holy Spirit...[They are] one and the same, being thrice-shining (τρισσοφαές) according to the mode of existence.'

(115) *Theol*. 3. 137–66. The mention of people with an experience of divine light might well refer to Symeon the Studite or more generally to the continuity of Orthodox tradition and to those theologians who, like Gregory Nazianzen, developed the theme of God as light. Symeon, therefore, emphasizes that the theology of light is based on their personal experience.

(116) See especially *Hymn* 33. 1–13, and also *Hymn* 1. 226; 2. 91; 12. 15–34; 38. 24–32; *Cap*. 1. 2; *Eth*. 10. 374–7. For the fuller exposition of Symeon's doctrine of God as 'light in three Hypostases' see Volker, *Praxis*, 315–20.

(127) *Cap*. 2. 22–5; *Hymn* 1. 9–20 and many other passages (especially in the *Hymns*). On the Platonic background of the comparison between God and the sun in Gregory Nazianzen see Moreschini, 'Platonismo', 1369 ff.

(128) *Cap*. 2. 22. Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc*. 21. 1. 13–15 [112] ('What the sun is for sensual creatures, God is for spiritual ones; the first enlightens the visible world, the second enlightens the invisible'). It has been stated that Symeon's 'belief that God created two worlds...takes us a long way along the path toward dualism': Garsoian, 'Heresy', 108. N. Garsoian seems to conflate the contrast between sensible and intelligible worlds, which is traditional for patristic literature, with the dualist contrast between good and evil. Symeon does speak elsewhere of the two ways which are available for people, i.e. the way towards God and that towards evil: cf. *Eth*. 11. 560–81. This is, however, a very traditional idea which derives from the Bible and early Christian writings: cf. Deut. 30: 19; *Doctrine* 1. 1 ff. [140 ff.]. Following this teaching, Symeon explicitly rejects any kind of ontological dualism and regards the idea of the equality, or equal competition, of God and evil as a 'blasphemy': *Eth*. 11. 578–80. This sharply distinguishes Symeon's ontology from Manichean, Messalian, and other dualist theories.

(132) *Eth*. 4. 799–801; *Hymn* 33. 18–20. On the concept of man as microcosm see Chapter 8 of our study.

(133) Cf. *Hymn* 45. 63. For the traditional background of the notion of man's 'glorious clothes' see Brock, *Perspectives*, p. iv, 98–104.

(145) *Cap*. 2. 17–18. Generally, we find an abundance of Areopagitic terms, unusual for Symeon, in his *Cap*. 2 (25 chapters in the middle of his 225 'Theological, Gnostic, and Practical Chapters'). The symbolism of darkness (as well as the Areopagitic language in general) is more common for Nikitas Stithatos: cf. his *Parad*. 5 5 [220]; *Chapt*. 1 1 [273]; 1. 42 [282–3]; 2. 50 [311]; 3. 39 [335]; 3. 53 [340]. Speaking of Symeon's *Cap*. 2, B. Fraigneau-Julien allows to the possibility of Nikitas' interference with the text of Symeon, while admitting that this is difficult to prove: *Sens*, 181.

(1) For a more comprehensive account of Symeon's anthropology, see Lascaris, *Liberation*, 47–118. For the general exposition of patristic anthropology see Wheeler Robinson, *Man*; Wallace-Hadrill, *Nature*; Jenkins, *Glory*. Cf.

Wingren, *Man* (on the anthropology of Irenaeus). Cf. also Allchin (ed.), *Image*.

(2) Cf. Gen. 1: 26–7, and Plato, *Theaetetus* 176 ab (the concept of man as *ὁμοίωσις Θεοῦ*). For the biblical background see Lossky, *Image*, 127–35. For the Platonic background see Merki, *Ὁμοίωσις*, 1–7.

(3) Symeon's estimation of 'external wisdom' was generally sceptical; he uses the word 'Hellenic' in a pejorative sense, speaking out against 'philosophers and those who learn Hellenic books': cf. *Hymn* 21. 55–6. We should not forget, however, that all Byzantine schoolboys were provided with a certain Hellenic background, and so everyone who studied at school must have accumulated a certain amount of philosophical education. In particular, Aristotelian logic was studied, as well as Greek poetry and prose. In spite of this, the general attitude of Byzantines to Greek philosophy was negative: Platonic and Neo-Platonic ideas were regarded as especially dangerous for Orthodoxy and interest in them was limited to a very narrow circle of intellectuals: see Meyendorff, *Hesychasm*, p. viii, 54–5; idem, *Byz. Theol.*, 72–3; Browning, 'Enlightenment'. This negative attitude towards Greek philosophy was crystallized on a dogmatic level by the Council of 1082 (against John Italos), which produced a special anathema against 'those who study Hellenic sciences and do not take them as tools of instruction only, but follow their futile theories and accept them as true': see Gouillard, *Synodikon*, 56. In the history of Byzantine civilization a negative attitude towards Greek philosophy always coexisted with a positive one, but in monastic circles the former predominated: see Meyendorff, 'Trends', 53 ff. Symeon, therefore, followed monastic tradition when rejecting the validity of 'secular wisdom'.

(5) Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc.* 38. 11. 16 [126]: 'king of the earth'. Cf. also Makarios of Egypt, *Hom.* 26. 1. 8 [206]: 'man was the lord of the heaven and earth'. Cf. Symeon's *Hymn* 53. 120 ff.: 'I made him...the lord and master of all visible [creatures], having submitted all visible [creatures] as servants to him alone.'

(6) Cf. Pythagoras [*Fragm. Pre-Socr.* i. 99]; Sextus Empiricus, *Hypotyp.* 2. 26 [i. 70]. Cf. in the *AP. Const.* 7. 34. 6 [428]: 'The summit of creation is a rational animal'; Justin, *Fragm.* [1585 B]: 'What is man if not a rational animal, consisting of soul and body?'; Athanasios, *Defin.* [533 C]: 'Man is a rational animal, mortal, intelligent, and capable to knowledge'; Nemesios, *Nat. Man* 1 [11]; Symeon in *Hymn* 23. 69–71: 'Which animal do I mean? Indeed I speak of man, rational among dumb [animals]'.

(8) Cf. *Symb. Chalc.*, *ACO* 2. 1. 2 [129]. Symeon's suggestion that the soul is blended and united with the body 'without mixture and confusion' reminds us of the following passage from Pseudo-Theodore of Edessa's *Theor.* [329]: 'The intelligent soul is conjoined with an animal-like body...Without change or confusion, and with each acting in accordance with its nature, they compose a single person, or hypostasis, with two complete natures.'

(9) *Disc.* 38. 11. 8–19 [124–6]. Cf. John of Damascus, *Exp.* 2. 12. 7 ff. [75 ff.].

(10) *Disc.* 40. 8. 1 [212]. Cf. Ellverson, *Nature*, 17 ff.

(22) On dichotomism and trichotomism, see Nemesios, *Nat. Man* 1 [1].

(31) See *Ambig.* 4 [1305 A]; cf. Thunberg, *Man*, 80 ff. Cf. also Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 2. 81 [155].

(32) *Eth.* 4, 799–801. Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc.* 38. 11. 13–14 [124–6]: 'God placed man upon the earth as a second world, the great within the small'. Cf. Origen, *Horn. Lev.* 5. 2 [336]; Gregory of Nyssa, *Man* [177 D]; Nemesios, *Nat. Man* 1 [15]; John of Damascus, *Exp.* 2. 12 [79].

(33) Cf. Democritus [*Fragm. Pre-Socr.* i. 153]; Aristotle, *Phys.* 252b; Philo, *De post. Cain.* 58 [ii. 13]; *Quis. rer. div. heres.* 155 [iii. 36].

(38) In particular, Symeon says that some people, namely those who have a 'warm complexion', are heated to excess and 'become weak and useless for any activity and motion' when the weather becomes too hot: *Cat.* 25. 138–44. Any European who has ever visited Istanbul (Constantinople) in the mid-summer, when the temperature is often above 40°C, would understand the whole truth of Symeon's observations.

(43) Maximos the Confessor, *Love* 3. 30 [94]: 'Physical bodies...are made up of opposites, that is, of earth, air, fire, and water.' Cf. Nemesios, *Nat. Man* 1 [7]; 4 [44–5]; John of Damascus, *Exp.* 2. 12. 59–62 [78]. The teaching derives

from the Pythagorean school: see *Fragm. Pre-Socr.* i. 449.

(45) *Eth.* 4. 392–4. Cf. Maximos the Confessor, *Love* 1. 79 [81]; 2. 12 [94] etc.; Nemesios of Emesa, *Nat. Man* 15 [72]; John of Damascus, *Exp.* 2. 12. 94–106 [79–80]. For the explanation of these three terms see *Philokalia* (English) 2. 380.

(50) *Theol.* 1. 412–14 and *Eth.* 6. 252–5. Cf. Dionysios, *Div. Names* 7. 1 [194] (the capacity of the intellect to apprehend divine realities).

(52) Respectively, *Eth.* 1. 12. 420 and *Cap.* 1. 38. Cf. *Cat.* 33. 53–61 (interpretation of Luke 11: 34: 'the eye as the light for the body' means the intellect). Cf. Makarios of Egypt, *Hom.* 7. 8. 85–7 [76] ('the intellect...is the eye of the soul').

(53) This notion is based on Gen. 1: 26: 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.' Among the scholarly studies of this notion there are: Cairns, *Image*; Burghardt, *Image*; Wingren, *Man*, 14–26 (deals with Irenaeus); Sullivan, *Image* (deals mainly with Augustine).

(54) Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Poes. dogm.* 7, 4 [447 A]; Maximos the Confessor, *Theol. Chapt.* 1. 11 [1088 A]; *Myst.* 7 [684 D]. John Chrysostom emphasizes that the body is not God's image: *Hom. Gen.* 8. 3–4 [72 ff.].

(55) Cf. John of Damascus, *Exp.* 3. 18. 20–2 [157–8]: 'What is "after the image" if not the intellect?' Cf. Philo, *De opif. mundi* 69[I. 23].

(57) Irenaeus, *Her.* 5. 6. 1 [77]; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 2. 22 [186]; Origen, *Princ.* 3. 6. 1 [280]; Diadochos, *Chapt.* 89 [149–50]; Maximos the Confessor, *Love* 3. 25 [154]0

(59) John Chrysostom, *Hom. Gen.* 8, 3 [72]; Cyril of Alexandria, *Anthropomorph.* [1068 C-1072 A].

(60) Tatian, *Orat.* 7: man is created in 'the image of God's immortality'; cf. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.* 4. 18 [477 B].

(61) Theodoret, *Quest. Genes.* 1. 20 [105 C]; Anastasios of Sinai, *Quest.* 89 [716 C-717 A]; Photios, *Amphiloch.* 253 [39–40].

(62) *Image* [1329 C-1340 C]; cf. Anastasios of Sinai, *Image* I. 1. 58–82 [9–11]. On the trinitarian interpretation of the image of God in patristic thought see Sullivan, *Image*, 165–95.

(63) Gregory of Nyssa, ibid. [1340 AC]; cf. Anastasios of Sinai, ibid, I. 3. 45–90 [19–21].

(68) Cf. *Hymn* 33. 18: 'The man, whom He created after His image and likeness...dominates over the earthly [creatures]...and over passions—this is what is meant by "in the image"'. Cf. *Euch.* 1. 1–13.

(79) *Var. Cent.* 1. 11 [1181 D–1184 A]. The 'Various Centuries' are not an authentic work of Maximos the Confessor but an anthology from his writings made by a later compiler: see *Philokalia* (English) 2. 49–50. Most of the chapters are taken from Maximos' *Quest. Thal.*; however, chapters 1. 1–1. 25 are not identified: see Disdier, 'Œuvre', 164.

(80) *Quest. Thal.* 61. 34–41 [87]. On patristic doctrine on fall and original sin see Williams, *Fall*, 167–314.

(81) Cf. Elijah the Presbyter, *Gnom. Anth.* 89 [297].

(83) Gregory Nazianzen in *Poes. hist.* 45 [1358 A] distinguishes two intellects in the fallen man: one good and another evil (according to the variant reading: *ἔστιν ἐμοὶ διπλοῦς νόος*).

(84) Theodore of Edessa, *Chapt.* 7 [305]; Diadochos, *Chapt.* 78 [135].

(85) Makarios of Egypt, *Hom.* 12. 1. 2–5 [107–8].

(86) Diadochos, *Chapt.* 78 [135–6].

(90) Cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *Hom. Rom.* [785 A].

(92) *Ladder* 26 [1028 A]; cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom*. 2. 13 [145]. As K. Ware shows, the sharply negative attitude to passions which is characteristic of many church Fathers has its roots in Stoics: 'Pathos', 317–18.

(93) Cf. Isaiah the Solitary, *Texts* 1 [30]. On this more positive understanding of passions see Ware, 'Pathos', 319–22.

(96) Irenaeus of Lyon, *Her*. 5. 19. 1 [249–51]. The notion of Christ as New Adam derives from Paul (1 Cor. 15: 22, 47–9).

(97) Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc*. 2. 25 [122–4].

(103) *Eth*. 13. 60. Cf. the same idea in John of Damascus, *Varl.-Joas*. 7 [908 B]: the devil enticed Adam and Eve 'by the hope of deification'. Cf. Photios, *Amphiloch*. 72 [74].

(104) *Theol*. 1. 357–66. Cf. Philotheos of Sinai, *Chapt*. 14 [278]: 'Adam fell through pride.'

(107) *Cat*. 5. 286–9. The theme of Adam's lament is traditional for the liturgical worship of the Orthodox Church. Cf. the *Stichiron* of the vespers of the Sunday of Forgiveness: 'Adam was cast out of paradise...Seated before the gates he wept, lamenting with a pitiful voice and saying: "Woe is me, what have I suffered in my misery...O paradise...pray that once more I may take pleasure in thy flowers..."' [*Triodion*, 170].

(116) The nucleus of this teaching is the idea that the interaction of God and human free will is necessary for deification. The saints, according to John of Damascus, are gods by divine grace, but it is by their own free choice (*προαίρεσις*) that they 'were united with God...and became by grace what He is by nature': *Exp*. 4. 15. 13–18[205].

(118) For a comprehensive account of Symeon's teaching on passions and the struggle against them, supplied with many patristic parallels, see Völker, *Praxis*, 129–32.

(2) See Florovsky, *Bible*, 57–8; Evdokimov, 'Currents', 26.

(3) It is noteworthy that all the fundamental ideas of Eastern ecclesiology were expressed by the great theologians of the second century, especially by Ignatios and Iraeneus. All the subsequent development of ecclesiological thought was based upon their ideas: see Durell, *Church*, 24–59, 202–54. Among modern general studies on patristic ecclesiology, the following ones are important: Bardy, *Théologie* (Clément- Irénée); idem, *Théologie* (Irénée-Nicée); Bouyer, *Église*, 213–627; idem, *Incarnation*; Delahaye, *Ecclesia*; Congar, *Église*; Herding, *Communio*; Mason, 'Conceptions'; Mersch, *Christ*; Plumpe, *Mater*; Zizioulas, *Being*.

(4) Cf. Origen, *Horn. Josh*. 3. 5 [306]; Cyprian, *Ep*. 73. 21 [794–5]; 4. 4 [475–6].

(5) *Symb. Nic-Cp. ACO* 2. 1. 2 [80]; Hahn, *Bibliothek*, 30.

(6) See Bouyer, *Église*, 333–71; Mersch, *Corps*; Wingren, *Man*, 159–70.

(9) An excellent book by R. Murray, *Symbols*, deals with the traditional imagery of the Church. The study concerns mainly Aphrahat and Ephrem the Syrian, but the patristic tradition in general is also implied. See also Brunet, 'Figures' in *DSp* 4. 384–401; Lampe, *PGL*, 430–2.

(10) See Murray, *Symbols*, 239–76. The expression 'pilgrim Church' is of Western origin; Augustine calls the Church 'a pilgrim in a foreign land': *City* 18. 51 [650]. At the same time, this expression corresponds to Hebrews 13:14 ('Here we have no abiding city'; cf. also Heb. 11: 13; 1 Pet. 2: 11) and to the general ecclesiological approach of the Eastern Fathers: cf. *Diogn*. 5. 2 [62]. Cf. also Irenaeus, *Her*. 4. 21. 3 [683]: the Church is built on the foreign land of this world. The concept of *ξενιτεία* ('pilgrimage': see the discussion in Chapter 4) may be regarded as a particular monastic development of the early Christian notion of a pilgrim Church.

(18) Cf. the comparison between the Church and man in Maximos the Confessor, *Myst*. 4 [672 B] and 7 [681 C–684 A]; cf. Thunberg, *Man*, 122–3.

(20) St. Paul speaks of Christ as head and the Christians as members of the Church's body: Eph. 1: 23; cf. 1 Cor. 12:

12. See also Ignatios of Antioch, *Ep. to the Smyrnians* 1. 2 [132–4]; Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc.* 32. 10 [106]; John Chrysostom, *Horn. 1 Cor.* 30. 1 [365]. Cf. Durell, *Church*, 12, 132, 144, 207; Murray, *Symbols*, 69–94.

(25) Cf. Eph. 5: 24–32. Cf. Methodios of Patara, *Symp.* 3. 8 [35–6]; Gregory of Nyssa, *Song* 11 [318]; Anastasios of Sinai, *Hexaem.* 12 [1064 A–1065 A]. Cf. Murray, *Symbols*, 131–42.

(27) *Her.* 4. 37. 7. 173–4 [943]; cf. Durell, *Church*, 207.

(30) Clement of Rome, *Cor.* 29 [148].

(31) Ignatios of Antioch, *Ep. to the Ephesians*, inscr. [56].

(32) Justin, *1 Apol.* 45. 1 [158].

(34) Cf. Origen, *Princ.* 3. 1. 18 [230–1]; Athanasios of Alexandria, *Incarn.* 5. 1 [278].

(35) Cf. Methodios of Patara, *Symp.* 8. 13 [98] (the free will as a source of good); Irenaeus of Lyon, *Her.* 4. 39. 3 [968–70] (as a source of evil).

(42) Cf. *Horn. Rom. 16* [254], where, interpreting Rom. 8: 29–30, Chrysostom advances the idea of the universal call: 'If the call alone would be sufficient, why have not all been saved? Because...not only the call [from God] but also the will (*προθεσις*) of those who are called are the reason of their salvation. The call is not compulsion or constraint. All have been called, but not all followed the call.'

(44) See *Light*, 334–5. Cf. Clement of Rome, *Corinth.* 42–4 [168–72]. On the apostolic succession of the hierarchy in general see Bouyer, *Eglise*, 401–47.

(45) Generally, the Dionysian idea of the hierarchical structure of the universe seems to be alien to Symeon: we do not find in his writings any reference or parallel to it: cf. Stathopoulos, *Gottesliebe*, 20.

(46) Dionysios the Areopagite included monks in the lowest hierarchical triad of 'those who are initiated', side by side with the catechumens and lay people ('saints'), though higher than the latter: see *Eccl. Hier. 6.* 3 [116]. Symeon's view is different: he links monks to the hierarchy and clergy rather than to the laity.

(49) Ibid. [fol. 217V., lines 12–16]. In the light of the texts quoted one may find the suggestions of some modern scholars concerning Symeon's alleged 'neglect' of the hierarchy rather ungrounded: see Kazhdan, 'Symeon' [*ODByz* 3, 1987] ('Symeon neglects the concept of hierarchy'); Kazhdan and Constable, *People*, 91 ('in Symeon's works there is no place' for ecclesiastical hierarchy); cf. also Garsoian, 'Heresy', 108 ('Symeon's rejection of hierarchical jurisdiction...').

(53) See, for example, *Hymn* 58 and *Ep.* 3. Cf. also Krivochéine, *Light*, 127 ff.

(58) Cf. Darrouzès, *SC* 122. 33. K. Ware points to the closeness of such a point of view to Donatism: 'Father', 308.

(59) Cf. Darrouzès, *SC* 122. 33. Exactly such a point of view is expressed in the *L. Andrew* [800 B], according to which when an unworthy priest celebrates the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit does not come down upon the holy gifts, and those who attend such liturgies are deprived of the presence of the Spirit. This extreme suggestion seems to be rather exceptional for Byzantine ecclesiastical literature.

(62) This notion derives from Symeon's personal experience with his spiritual father Symeon the Studite (cf. the discussions in Chapters 1 and 4). On the understanding of spiritual fatherhood as a charismatic vocation, traditional in Eastern monasticism, see Bunge, *Vaterschaft*, 37–78.

(63) Incidentally, in the Greek Orthodox Church even up to the present time not all priests are allowed to hear confessions, but only those who, upon reaching a certain age, receive the blessing of a bishop to become spiritual fathers.

(65) This view is expressed, among many other writers, by Cyprian, *Ep*. 69. 5 [753–4]; *Ep*. 72. 2 [776–7].

(68) See *Priesthood* 6. 4 [317–20]. J. van Rossum has made some interesting observations concerning the correspondence between Clement of Alexandria's concept of the true gnostic and Symeon's understanding of priesthood: see *Problem*, 36–8. Clement, in particular, writes: 'Those who have exercised themselves perfectly and gnostically, according to the Gospels, may be enrolled in the chosen body of the Apostles. Such a one is in reality a presbyter of the Church, and a true minister of the will of God...not as being ordained by men, nor regarded righteous because he is a presbyter, but being enrolled in the presbyterate because he is righteous'; *Strom*. 6. 13 [504]. The idea that 'ordination from men' is not sufficient for being a true presbyter is clearly expressed here.

(69) See Lampe, PGL, 891. Symeon, in particular, speaks of the 'dread mystery' of divine illumination (*Hymn* 1. 1), of the 'paradoxical mystery' of one's withdrawal from the world (*Hymn* 9. 9), of the 'new mystery' of the vision of light (*Hymn* 22. 1), of the 'wealth of the mysteries' of contemplation (*Hymn* 29. 248) etc.

(70) Cf. Kelly, *Doctrines*, 423. The teaching on seven sacraments infiltrated into the Eastern Church as a result of Western influence after the late sixteenth century: cf. Meyendorff, *Byz*. *Theol*., 191–2.

(77) *Ep*. 4 [Vatic, gr. 1782, fol. 222, lines 8–11]. It is again quite surprising to read in N. Garsoian's article, devoted to the 'links' between Byzantine heretics and Symeon, the assertions that Symeon's doctrine on Baptism 'brings in mind Neo-Paulician rejection of orthodox baptism' and that it 'tacitly denies the validity of child baptism, explicitly repudiated by the Bogomils and Paulicians': 'Heresy', 109.

(86) Cf. Krivochéine, *Light*, 147–8.

(91) *Eth*. 10. 328–38. This controversial text was discussed by John Chrysostom, who gave a rather pragmatic interpretation of it, asserting that the Samaritans 'received the Spirit of remission [of sins], but did not receive the Spirit of miracles'; he also suggested two possible reasons why the Holy Spirit was not given to the Samaritans: either Philip, who baptized them, did not give Him to them 'honouring the Apostles', or he had not the authority to give the Spirit because such an authority was restricted to the twelve Apostles, whereas Philip was one of the seven deacons: *Horn*. *Acts* 18. 2–3 [143–4].

(99) Cf. *Ap*. *Const*. 3. 16. 4 [Funk 7]: 'You anoint the head of the baptized...by the holy oil in type of spiritual Baptism'; also Cyril of Jerusalem, *Myst*. 3. 6 [128]. Cf. Lampe, *Seal*, 216 ff. Developing this traditional imagery, Symeon goes further, stressing mystical side of inner anointing by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

(105) *Bapt*. [993 C]. Cf. Ware, 'Baptism', 446. For the comparison between Symeon's understanding of Baptism and that of Makarios of Egypt see Hatzopoulos, *Two Outstanding Cases*, 133 ff.

(107) Cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *Com*. *Is*. 5. 6 [1444 B].

(1) The limits of this study do not allow us to discuss Symeon's asceticism in a more substantial way (apart from the observations made in chapter 4). As far as the connection between Symeon's asceticism and the Eastern tradition in general is concerned, the comprehensive study by W. Völker covers this field to a significant degree. The German scholar has demonstrated many parallels between Symeon and preceding writers, in particular John Klimakos and Isaac the Syrian: see *Praxis, passim*. Symeon as an ascetical writer was certainly influenced by Klimakos, though this influence was not a personal one, in the sense that we can speak of Symeon the Studite's influence on Symeon the younger. The 'Ladder' by John Klimakos is a synthesis of centuries-old ascetical practice, upon which it is totally based. Klimakos expressed not so much his personal ideas as accumulated traditional ones, having produced a kind of monastic handbook intended for practical use: this is the reason why his book obtained such popularity in monastic circles. Therefore, we should speak of the influence of monastic tradition on Symeon through Klimakos rather than of Symeon's special devotion to Klimakos.

(2) For an analysis of the patristic teaching on tears and repentance see Hausherr, *Penthos*. Cf. Gillet, 'Tears'; Lot-Borodine, 'Larmes'. Some aspects of Symeon's teachingon tears are outlined in Sylvia Mary, 'Tears'.

(7) *Cat*. 4. 663–5. Symeon repeats Mark the Monk, *Penit*. [981 C–984 B].

(9) One of Symeon's very rare precise references to a patristic writing, which is, however, hardly identifiable: see Krivochéine, *SC* 96. 387 (nn. 1 and 2).

(13) The copyist of the 14th-century *Coisl*. 268, to which reference was made earlier, indicated some parallels of that kind. See, for example, fol. 45, where the copyist added the following marginal note: 'Symeon [also said] that without tears all the labour of a monk is useless', to the passage from the *Discourse* 12 by Isaac 'Concerning Hesychasts' (*Hom*. 15= *Syr*. *Horn*. 14), which is devoted to repentance and tears ('When you attain to the region of tears, know that your mind has left the prison of this world...').

(14) Gregory of Nyssa, *Ephrem* [829 D]. The authorship of this encomium is disputed: see Quasten, *Patrology* III. 279; *Clavis* II. 224.

(19) *Ladder* 7 [812 A]. For 'joy-making mourning' in Klimakos see Chryssavgis, *Ascent*, 147–50. For Klimakos' teaching on tears in general see Völker, *Scala*, 154–87.

(22) 'Ivresse', 368. Krivochéine mentions Philo, Plotinus, Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, Eusebios of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, and Makarios of Egypt among Eastern authors in whom this theme occurs: ibid. 368–9. For the full discussion of the topic see Lewy, *Ebrietas*, 73–164.

(26) *Hom*. 85 [338] = *Syr*. *Hom*. 35 [245–6]. The image of oil plays here the same rôle as the images of wine and honey in the passages quoted above.

(27) Cf. the expression 'sweet tears' in *Syr*. *Hom*. 22 [165] and 35 [229]. For a fuller treatment of this and other ascetical and mystical themes of Isaac the Syrian see Alfeyev, *Isaac*.

(44) On this notion see above, in the section on the incomprehensibility of God.

(50) *Hom*. *John* 15 [98]. Cf. Origen, *Princ*. 1. 2. 6 [36]; 2. 6. 3 [141].

(51) *Iamb*. 33 [181]. Cf. the interpretation of John 1:18 by Eusebios of Caesarea, *Eccl*. *Theol*. 1. 20 [83]: 'While the invisible God did not reveal [Himself] (*ούκ ἐξηγήσατο*), the Only-begotten Son...accomplished a revelation [of God] to people.'

(56) *Beat*. 6 [142]. It is noteworthy that Gregory, unlike Chrysostom, does not apply the vision of God to the future life.

(57) Isaac, *Hom*. 43 [177].

(60) Note the difference between this assertion of Symeon and the interpretation of John 1:18 by John Chrysostom. The latter suggests that the word ἐξηγήσατο ('he has revealed') 'indicates the clearer and more evident teaching which [Christ] gave': *Hom*. *John* 15 [100]. Chrysostom equates the 'revelation' with the teaching of Christ, as well as the 'vision of God' with knowledge of His existence. Any kind of 'vision of the divinity' is, therefore, rejected. Earlier (in Chapter 2) a similar difference between Symeon and Chrysostom in their understanding of Matt. 5: 8 was observed. It is obvious that the theme of vision of God was treated by both authors in quite a different way.

(62) The opponents of Symeon deny the interpretation of John 1:18 according to which the Son revealed (ἐξηγήσατο) the invisible Father to people. Instead, they understand the verse in the sense that 'the Only-begotten Son explained (ἐξηγήσατο) that no one has ever seen God.' Cf. John Chrysostom, *Hom*. *John* 15 [100]: 'What have we learned from the Son...? That it is impossible to see God and that nobody knows Him except the Son.'

(63) The *SC* indices point out about forty-five instances when the verse is quoted or alluded to by Symeon. Although the majority of these allusions do not imply the whole idea of 1 Tim. 6: 16 but only certain terms used by Paul (especially, *φωῦ ἀπρόσιτον*, 'the light unapproachable'), nevertheless the constant presence of the verse in Symeon's mind is noteworthy.

(76) The teaching of the 'beatific vision' was precisely formulated in the West after Symeon's lifetime, namely by Thomas Aquinas: see Malevez, 'Essence' in *DSp* 4. 1335–40. This teaching became known in the East much later

than it had appeared in the West, and was questioned during the Palamite controversy of the 14th century: see Halleux, 'Palamisme', 411–14. B. Fraigneau-Julien shows that Symeon was not consistentin the development of the notion of the total invisibility of divine essence; side by side with the affirmations which exclude the vision of divine essence, there are some declarations in Symeon that suggest its possibility: see *Sens*, 162–3. Earlier allusionwas made to B. Krivochéine's opinion that Symeon, though being inconsistent in terminology, generally adheres to the traditional Eastern division between God's invisible essence and visible energies: see 'Essence', 168–70; *Light*, 194–8.

(81) For more references, as well as for the exposition of the theme of Christ in Symeon, see Krivochéine, *Light*, 239–58.

(87) *Poes. hist*. 11. 4 [1512 A]. Cf. the patristic notion of the vision of the trinitarian light (see the discussion in the next section of this chapter).

(90) Cf. Maximos the Confessor, *Love* 4. 72 [226]: 'They [the pure in heart] will see God...as soon as they purify themselves through love and self-mastery; and the more intensely they strive, the fuller will their vision be.' Therefore, according to Maximos, the promise of Christ is being realized gradually in this life, rather than in the future.

(92) Cf. Krivochéine, *Light*, 32.

(93) The term φῶς ('light'), for example, appears in 54 of the 58 'Hymns' by Symeon, in 2 of the 3 *Theol*, in the majority of *Eth*. and *Cat*. The verb ὁράω ('to see') is used in Symeon's *Theol*. and *Eth*. even more frequently than the term 'light', according to J. Darrouzes' statistics: see *SC* 129. 515. Other terms connected with the vision of light (*φωτίζω, φωτσμός, ἐλλάμπω, ἔλλαμψις, θέα, θεάομαι, ὁραις*, etc.) are also widely employed. As A. Krumbacher noticed, the terms connected with vision and light are especially characteristic of Studite literature: *Geschichte*, 677 (n. 4). Even taking into account the traditional background of this terminology, one can affirm that Symeon's extensive usage of it is extraordinary.

(94) Cf. Veniamin, *Transfiguration*, 239 and 249 (the author expresses his surprise that Symeon refers to the Transfiguration only briefly and in passing). In this there is a contrast between him and later Hesychasts, such as Gregory of Sinai and Gregory Palamas, who expressed their theory of vision of divine light in homilies 'On the Transfiguration'. Cf. also Gregory Nazianzen, who speaks of the divine light in his homilies 'On Baptism' (*Disc*. 40) and 'On Easter' (*Disc*. 45); cf. the homilies 'On the Transfiguration' by Andrew of Crete and John of Damascus.

(95) On the Evagrian notion of the vision of light by the intellect see Guillaumont, 'Vision'; idem, *Origines*, 145–7; Bunge, *Geistgebet*, 62–73.

(96) Here and below some Syriac terms are cited for those Evagrian texts which are preserved only in the Syriac version.

(100) *Gnost*. 45 [178], where Evagrios refers to Basil the Great; cf. *Pract*. 64 [648–9]. Cf. also *Prayer* 74 [1184 B]: the light which acts in the intellect.

(117) *Hom*, (III) 16. 8. 14 [206]. Cf. Clement of Rome, *Cor*. 36. 2 [160]; 59. 3 [194].

(124) The analysis of those Syriac writings which were definitely unknown in the Greek-speaking world of the Byzantine epoch, in particular, the writings by Joseph Hazzaya and John of Dalyatha (except four homilies by the latter under the name of Isaac), falls beyond the scope of the present study. I would wish to point out, however, that the doctrine of the vision of the divine light as expressed by Symeon the New Theologian is very close to similar doctrines of Joseph Hazzaya and especially of John of Dalyatha: for the scholarly exposition of the latter see Beulay, *Enseignement*, 386–464 (with reference to other Syriac writers). In this section I shall indicate a few parallels, without providing a whole list of corresponding points.

(131) *Hom*. 43 [177]. Cf. Isaac, *Hom*. 32 [140] = *Syr. Hom*. 22 [174]. Cf. the notion of the vision of the trinitarian light in John of Dalyatha's *Letter* 5. 2 [320–1]: 'to see the resplendence of the beauty of the Holy Trinity'. Cf. ibid. 27. 1

[386–9]: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as one lamp. Cf. Joseph Hazzaya, *Monast*. 98 [372–3].

(139) *Ladder* 27 [1109 BD]. This vision of an angel must be distinguished from the visions of divine light in Evagrios, Makarios, Maximos, Isaac, and Symeon: in these authors the light is not an angel but God Himself, as Symeon emphasizes (see below). Cf. the remark of Gregory Palamas in the *Triads* 2. 3. 10 [546]: 'the Hesychasts have never claimed that this light was an angel...'

(141) *Chapt*. 40 [108]. Another important theme of Diadochos is warning against false visions of light: see ibid. 40 [108]; 36 [105]. (This is a theme which is not characteristic for Symeon, but which does occur in Symeon the Studite, *Asc*. 30). In general, the term 'light' occurs very frequently in Diadochos: see *SC* 5–bis, 203.

(142) Athanasios of Alexandria, *L. Anth*. 10. 1 [162].

(143) Rufinus, *Hist. Mon*. 10. 8. 11–12 [324–5].

(147) *Euch*. 1. 135–7. This vision is to be identified with the one described in *Cat*. 16. 78 ff., since they have much in common; in particular, both took place when Symeon was already a novice and disciple of Symeon the Studite.

(149) Cf. *Euch*. 2. 141 ('to see the light of Your face'). Cf. John of Dalyatha, *Letter* 11. 3 [332]: 'Christ will show us the beauty of His face.'

(151) See, for example, Evagrios, *Gnost*. 28 [134–42]; Makarios of Egypt, *Hom*. 54 [38–41]; Diadochos, *Chapt*. 87 [146–7]; Isaac, *Hom*. 46 [287] = *Syr. Hom*. 39 [302]; Maximos the Confessor, *Love* 4. 96 [237]. Cf. Hausherr, 'Nuits'.

(155) Cf. *Hymn* 12. 19–23: 'The three of Them are light: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit...The three are seen to me as in one countenance...'; cf. *Hymn* 1. 226; 2. 86–94; 21. 147; 24. 248 ff., 25. 33–48; 33. 1 ff.

(158) In this Symeon's visions of Christ might be compared with Paul's vision as recounted in Acts 9: 3–4. In the case of Paul's vision, the light and the voice of Christ appeared at the same time. Symeon, when describing his first visions of light in *Euch*. 1, emphasizes that he was not immediately granted to hear the voice of Christ: see *Euch*. 1. 159–61; it is only later that Symeon heard Christ speaking to him: see *Euch*. 2. 225 ff.

(159) But he does speak of the vision of light which took place after he venerated an icon of the Holy Virgin: see *Euch*. 1. 255 ff.

(164) It has already been mentioned (see chapter 7, the section on 'God as light') that the 'darkness' symbolism is almost totally absent in Symeon. This is why we are not inclined to regard Gregory of Nyssa and Dionysios the Areopagite as direct predecessorsof Symeon.

(166) Symeon often uses the terms *διάνοια* (mind) and *καρδία* (heart) as synonyms of *νοῦς*, when speaking of the mystical vision of light. Both terms are of biblical origin and occur in the Septuagint, being also widely used in Christian ascetical literature. In particular, *καρδία* is one of the key anthropological terms in 'Makarian Homilies'. The term *νούς* derives from ancient Greek philosophical anthropology and is also used by Christian authors from St. Paul onwards.

(180) *Hymn* 44. 349–75. Cf. a similar notion, with use of the language of 'immersing', in John of Dalyatha: 'The soul sees the light which shines in it and transforms it into the likeness [of the light]...The soul is united with the formless light, which is the light of the Holy Trinity that shines in its creature. The soul is plunged into the waves of the beauty [of this light] and remains in wonder for a long time...It [remains] in the cloud of the light'; *Hom*. 8 [*Vatic. syr*. 124. 296a–297b] quoted in Beulay, *Enseignement*, 388–9. The expression 'the cloud of light' (φωτὸςνεφέλη) occurs also in Symeon: see *Hymn* 17. 326.

(193) *Hymn* 12. 59; 15. 49; 29. 225.

(207) *Eth*. 8. 72–84. Cf. Ephrem the Syrian, *Opera* 11. 266 ('Greek Ephrem').

(209) *Hymn* 51. 35–8. Cf. the image of 'the star with a great radiance' in Joseph Hazzaya, *Monast*. 98 [372–3].

(213) Cf. *Hom*. 7. 5 [74]. One of the most characteristic expressions of Makarios, which emphasizes a conscious character of a mystical experience: cf. similar expressions (with use of *αἴσθησις*) in *Hom*. 10. 2; 14. 2; 37. 7; 47. 11. Symeon also widely used these Makarian expressions, which might have evoked certain Messalian resonances: cf. Krivochéine, *SC* 96. 151 ff. There are in fact several ascetical and mystical terms which are characteristic of both Makarios and the Messalians. In particular, Makarios repeatedly employs the terms related to spiritual experience, such as *πληροφορία* and *πληροφορέω, αἴσθησις* and *αἰσθάνμαι, πεῖρα, γνῶσις*, etc., while the same terms are used by the Messalians. However, as C. Stewart recently proved (see *Working*), all these terms are common to the Greek Christian ascetical tradition as a whole, and so it is not surprising that we find them in Makarios. For the most recent and by far the most detailed discussion of the possible Messalian background of Makarios and Symeon see Hatzopoulos, *Two Outstanding Cases* (the author objects to the idea that there were direct links between these two authors and the Messalians).

(230) It does not have there any technical meaning and refers to deep sleep (Gen. 2: 21: sleep of Adam), horror connected with divine vision (Gen. 15: 12; Dan. 10: 7), horror in general (Ezek. 16: 16; 27: 35; 32: 10), fear of God (1 Sam. 11: 7), haste (Ps. 30/31: 22), madness (Deut. 28: 28).

(231) *Pract*. 14 [532–4]; cf. Origen, *Cels*. 3. 24 [220]; ibid. 4. 19 [289]; cf. *Apophthegmata*, Anthony 37 [88 B].

(233) For ecstasy in non-Christian religions and the Old Testament see 'Extase' in *DSp* 4, 2045–83.

(234) Cf. Guillaumont, *Origines*, 138–44.

(235) Athanasios of Alexandria, *L. Anth*. 82. 4 [344–6].

(240) Palladios, *Laus. Hist*. 1 [18].

(247) See Daniélou, 'Mystique' in *DSp* 2, 1872–85; idem, *Platonisme*, 274–326 (the concept of 'ecstatic love' in Gregory).

(248) See Roques, 'Ténèbre' in *DSp* 2, 1885–1911.

(251) ibid. 2. 59 [56]; cf. *Theol. Chapt*. 1. 81 [116 B]: the mind transcends itself and settles in a silence beyond all thoughts; ibid. 2. 59 [1149 C]: a man is snatched up to mystical contemplation.

(252) Sherwood, *Ambigua*, 153. For Maximos' doctrine of ecstasy see ibid. 124–54; Völker, *Maximus*, 351–65; Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 448–51.

(257) Cf. Brock, 'Isaac', 83 ff.

(258) Cf. *Syr. Hom*. 5 [73], 17 [139], 22 [166], etc. On the Syriac terminology of ecstasy (in particular, on that of John of Dalyatha) see Beulay, *Enseignement*, 397 ff.

(261) Cf. Athanasios of Alexandria, *L. Anth*. 65. 2 (see the quotation above).

(264) Cf. *Eth*. 1. 12. 323–8 where the three terms are used as equal. Cf. also *Hymn* 18. 63: *ἐν ἐκστάσει ἁρπάζει* ('seizes in ecstatic rapture'). Unlike his spiritual father Symeon the Studite, he does not use the term *ἔκστασις* in its negative meaning ('frenzy').

(265) *Cat*. 22. 88–112 (cf. the quotation in chapter 1). Nikitas describes this vision of Symeon as an ecstasy: see *Vie* 5. 20 (*ἐν ἐκστάσει ὤν*).

(270) Cf. Krivochéine, *Light*, 341.

(272) Cf. *Eth*. 1. 12. 329 ff.: 'When people hear that a certain saint, being in contemplation of God and rapture of the intellect, spent a certain number of days and nights in this state...'

(274) *Eth*. I. 12. 338–412 (338–9, 373–7, 406–12). Cf. the concept of the 'constant' ision of light in 'Greek Isaac',

Hom. 43 [177]. John of Dalyatha in his *Letter* 40. 3 [432–3] speaks of one monk, who, at the beginning of his spiritual life, fell into ecstasy every time when the light of the Holy Trinity appeared to him; later his visions became more regular, he became 'accustomed to the beauty that surpasses all beauty' and acquired a feeling of the constant presence of God.

(276) *Vie* III. 3–4. There is an interesting parallel to this testimony by Nikitas in the 'Life of Plotinus' written by his disciple Porphyry. According to the latter, Plotinus 'many times (*πολλάκις*) lifted himself...to the first and all-transcendent God...' Porphyry claims that four times he saw his teacher in ecstasy, mentioning that he himself achieved it only once when he was already 68: see 23. 7–24 in Plotin, *Ennéades* I. 26–7.

(277) Cf. Aristotelis, *Eth*. *Nicom*. 2. 3. 5 [1104b]. On the different meanings of *πάθος* in both Greek philosophy and patristic theology see Ware, 'Pathos'. The meaning of *ἀπάθεια* depends on that of *πάθος*, and so is also variable.

(278) Cf. Persaeus [*Stoic*. *fragm*. 449 = i. 99]; Diog. Laert., *Vitae* vii,117 [346]; Seneca, *Ep*. 1. 9. 1–2 [17]. Cf. Rist, *Philosophy*, 31. Philo transferred this ideal to the Old Testament righteous men: cf. the image of Moses as *ἀπάθής* in Philo, *Leg*. *all*. II. 102 [111].

(281) Cf. Lampe, *PGL*, 170. For the idea of *ἀπάθεια* in patristic thought see Lot-Boro-dine, *Déification*, 70–86; Bardy, 'Apathie' in *DSp* 1, 727–46; Miquel, *Léxique*, 119–29.

(282) *Strom*. 4. 22 [309]; 6. 9 [468]; 6. 13 [484]. Cf. Origen, *Comm*. *Prov*. 19. 17 [209 A]; 24. 31 [232 A]. Cf. also the conception of the *ἀπαθής* as a true philosopher in Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc*. 26. 13 [256–8].

(291) Ibid. 26 [1064 BC] and 25 [997 BC]. Cf. the discussion of Symeon the Studite's dispassion in chapter 4. For the fuller treatment of the theme of dispassion in Klimakos see Chryssavgis, *Ascent*, 184–8.

(294) Evagrios, *Pract*. 2 [498].

(299) *Love* 2. 87 [137]. Cf., however, 'Greek Isaac' (John of Dalyatha), *Hom*. 7 [32]: 'It is better for you to eat deadly poison than to eat with a woman, even if it should be your mother or sister'.

(300) *Ladder* 15 [892 D]. Cf. the episode involving Nonnos, Bishop of Heliopolis, in *L*. *Pelag*. [665 AB]. In monastic literature, woman is traditionally regarded as a source of sexual desire, and so the insistence upon the necessity to avoid any kind of contact with women is a commonplace. (One should not forget that Byzantine monastic literature was almost entirely dominated by male writers; among a very few exceptions are several nuns whose sayings are included in *the Apophthegmata*: cf. Ward, 'Apophthegmata'). The theme of avoidance of women is much more developed than that of being dispassionate when communicating with them. Klimakos himself, after the episode with Nonnos, tells us of how 'the demon of sensuality', in order to destroy a monk, suggests to him extreme piety and even a fountain of tears while he is sitting with women and teaching them concerning death, judgement, and chastity: Ladder 15 [893 C].

(301) *Ladder* 15 [893 A]; cf. *Egypt*. *Solit*. 67 [395]. Both texts are rather exceptional. In early Christian literature, secular music and especially playing instruments were usually regarded as demonic activities: see Clement of Alexandria, *Ped*. 2. 4 [181–2]; 3. 11 [280]; Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc*. 5. 35 [364–8]. Cf. McKinnon, *Music*, 1 ff.

(304) This expression indicates that the opponents of Symeon were representatives of Constantinopolitan aristocracy.

(313) *L*. *Anthony* 60. 5–7 [294–6]. Cf. ibid. 47. 3 [264]: 'Nobody had ever seen him without clothes (γυμνωθε´ντα), neither had anybody seen his body naked.' Cf. Palladios, *Dial*. *Chrys*. 17 [346–8].

(314) *L*. *Nikiph*. *Mil*. [31]. Cf. also 'Greek Isaac' (John of Dalyatha): 'Do not expose any part of your body in front of anyone, and do not touch the body of another...nor permit anyone to touch your body'; *Hom*. 7 [32].

(317) Among general studies on deification in patristic tradition see Popov, 'Ideya' (one of the first scholarly contributions to the subject, written by a new martyr of the Russian Church); Gross, *Divinisation* (the first

systematic investigation into the subject); Lot-Borodine, *Déification*; Congar, 'Déification'; Dalmais, 'Patristique' in *DSp* 3, 1376–89. More recent works by Greek scholars: Mantzaridis, *Deification* (deals mostly with Gregory Palamas), and Nellas, *Deification*. See also two theses: Cullen, *Deification*; Russell, *Deification*. For the most recent and most comprehensive treatment of the subject see Larchet, *Divinisation* (concentrated mostly on Maximos the Confessor).

(318) For the biblical (including the New Testament) and Judaic background of this doctrine see Gross, *Divinisation*, 70–111; Russell, *Deification*, 100–220. For Hellenistic analogies see Gross, *Divinisation*, 5–69; Russell, *Deification*, 44–99a; Places, 'Pensée' in *DSp* 3, 1370–75.

(322) For the exposition and analysis of this doctrine see Alès, 'Récapitulation', 185 ff.; Kelly, *Doctrines*, 170–4; Lawson, *Theology*, 140 ff.; Wingren, *Man*, 79–90; 122–32; 170–80; 192–201.

(325) *Protr*. 11 [81]. Cf. Gross, *Divinisation*, 163. On Clement's understanding of deification see Butterworth, 'Deification'.

(328) *Incarn*. 54. 2 [458]. Cf. *Adelph*. 4 [1077 A]: '[The Son of God] became man so that we became gods through Him.'

(332) Cf. Winslow, *Dynamics*, 179.

(333) Cf. θ∈΄ωσις, θ∈ὸς γἰγνομαι, θ∈ὁω, θ∈οποι∈΄ω, ποι∈΄ω, θ∈ὁν, etc. in *Disc*. 2. 22; 7. 23; 17. 9; 21. 2; 29. 19; 30. 14; 30. 21; 31. 4; 34. 12; 38. 11; 40. 42.

(336) Dionysios, *Hier*. 1 [66]; ibid. 2 [70]; ibid. 6 [118–19]; Maximos the Confessor, *Myst*. 24 [704 D]; cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc*. 31. 28. 10 [332] (deification though Baptism). For the connection between deification and the Eucharist in Maximos see Volker, *Maximus*, 473; see also Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 456–8. For a comprehensive account of Maximos' concept of deification in general see Völker, *Maximus*, 471–89.

(338) Cf. in his *Theol*. *Chapt*. 2. 25 [1136 B]: 'God the Word, the Son of God and of the Father, became son of man Himself in order to make men gods and sons of God...'

(342) Cf. his references to John of Damascus during his polemic with the Synod in Constantinople: *Vie* 89–92.

(344) *Images* 1. 19 [95]. Reference to Gregory, *Disc*. 40. 6 [208]. Note the link between John the Theologian and Gregory the Theologian, which is indirectly suggested by John of Damascus in the passage quoted.

(348) As to Isaac the Syrian, he does not provide us with any dogmatic definition or theological discussion of deification; however, he speaks of the total transfiguration of human nature by the grace of God at the final stages of one's perfection, when one becomes full of divine light and contemplates one's own beauty (see the quotation in the earlier section on the vision of light).

(351) *Hymn*. *Faith* 5. 17 [22]. For the full treatment of the theme of deification (divinization) in Ephrem see Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 148–54; cf. also Brock, 'Introduction', 72–4. In the fact that the concept of divinization is to be found in Ephrem, S. Brock sees a correction to the widespread opinion that this concept is something that crept into Eastern Christianity under Hellenistic influence: *Luminous Eye*, 148–9; 'Introduction', 73–4.

(352) Cf. Kern, *Antropologiya*, 394.

(357) Good Thursday, *Canon* by Kosmas of Maiuma, Canticle Four [*Triodion*, 550–1].

(362) Cf. *Enn*. 1. 2. 6 [57]: 'man's striving is not [only] to be out of sin, but to be god'. Plotinus would not find a place for the idea of the transfiguration of matter, which, according to his philosophy, remains evil even when it participates in intelligible reality: cf. Deck, *Nature*, 79.

(379) Cf. Krivochéine, *SC* 96. 151–9.

(392) *Hymn* 23. 413–20; cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc*. 39. 8 [164]. The idea of endless perfection is developed also in *Hymn* 1. 180–3: For over the ages there is no end to this progress, for the termination of this growing towards the endless end (ἀτ∈λ∈΄στου τ∈΄λους) will be a grasping of what is totally ungraspable.' On the closeness of this passage to Gregory of Nyssa see Krivochéine, *Light*, 386.

(397) Cf. Ignatios of Antioch, *Ep. to the Ephesians* 4. 2 [60]: 'You are members of His [the Father's] Son'.

(398) Symeon uses the language of Paul in 1 Cor. 12: 23–4.

(402) As is well known, it was Plotinus who was 'ashamed that he was in the body': see 'Life of Plotinus' 1. 1–2 in Plotin, *Ennéades* I. 1. However, Symeon does not seem to imply here the Neo–Platonist contempt of the body; rather, he is polemicizing with his contemporaries.

(404) As in Latin translation by Pontanus: cf. *PG* 120. 531.

(407) Cf. for example, some texts devoted to the Nativity of Christ; Vespers, Lity, *Stichiron*, Tone Two: 'A great and marvellous wonder has come to pass this day. A Virgin bears Child and Her womb suffers no corruption' [*Menaion*, 264]; Matins, *Sessional Hymn*: 'How He is contained in a womb, Whom nothing can contain?' [ibid. 268]; Matins, *Second Canon*, Canticle Four: According to His good pleasure, by a strange self-emptying, He passed through the womb, yet kept it sealed' [ibid. 274].

(4) Cf. Krivochéine, 'Writings', 324.

(5) I mean Chrysostom's efforts to raise the moral tone of Constantinopolitan clergy and aristocracy (including the empress), which were one of the main reasons of his deposition by the 'Synod at the Oak' in 403 and exile; cf. Theodore's refusal to recognize the divorce of the emperor Constantine VI, which likewise led to exile.

(7) Cf. Krivochéine, *Light*, 104.

(8) The difficult problem of 'heretical' mysticism, i.e. the kind that leads people out of the Church, falls beyond the scope of this study. Examples of such mysticism are numerous throughout the history of Christianity (Montanism, Manicheism, Messalianism, etc.), but fortunately they are not directly relevant to our main subject: Symeon the New Theologian has never been proclaimed a heretic. It must only be pointed out that it is conformity to tradition that has always been regarded in the Church as the first criterion for making a distinction between 'true' and 'heretical' mysticism.

(9) See the analysis of his theology and mysticism in Völker, *Praxis*, 456–89. It has been noticed that in his theology Nikitas was much more dependent on Dionysios that on Symeon; in spite of his high veneration of Symeon, he never quotes the latter in his theological tracts: Darrouzès, *SC* 81. 34 ff.

(10) On his edition of Symeon's writings see Krivochéine, 'Symeon i Nikita'. On his'Life of Symeon' see Hausherr, *Mystique*, pp. xv–xxxvii.

(11) Cf. Lot-Borodine, *Cabasilas*, 183–4.

(12) On the predecessors of Hesychasm in this period see Meyendorff, *Palamas*, 56–71; idem., *Study*, 13–27.

(13) There is no critical edition of this discourse. The text printed in *PG* 147. 945 ff. seems to be rather incomplete: it includes only one passage from Symeon. However, some manuscripts, in particular *Vind. theol*. 274 and *Baroc. 69*, contain more than twenty passages from Symeon; see Darrouzes, *SC* 51–bis. 116–19. The passages quoted in the manuscript version of the discourse are mostly from Symeon's 'Chapters', as well as from *Hymn* 21; some passages are not identifiable (including the one quoted in *PG* version).

(15) In the manuscript tradition it exists under the name of Symeon, but somewhat separately: it is not normally included in the basic collection of his writings. The style and the contents of the discourse differ from the original writings of Symeon; there are also some themes in the discourse which we do not encounter in Symeon's genuine works (in particular, the warnings about false visions of light); cf. Krivochéine, *Light*, 79. I. Hausherr, while rejecting

Symeon's authorship of the tract, ascribed it to Nikiphoros: see *Méthode*, 129–34. More recently A. Rigo proved that the attribution of the 'Method' to Nikiphoros is ungrounded; however, this scholar also dates the tract to the 13th century: see 'Niceforo'.

(17) Cf. 'So, sitting in the stillness of the cell and in a remote corner...lower your head so that your beard touches your chest...constrain your breathing...so that you do not breath freely, and endeavour with your mind to find the innermost place in your heart where all the powers of your soul are hidden and reside': *Méthode*, 164 [68].

(19) Cf. Meyendorff, *Study*, 155: 'In his [Symeon's] Christocentrism, his eucharistic spirituality and his theology concerning the light, Palamas certainly owes much to that great mystic of the eleventh century, to whom however he scarcely ever refers.' One may perceive certain traces of Symeon's influence also in the doctrine of Palamas of the vision of God and deification, while in his teaching on prayer Palamas was certainly influenced by the 'Method' ascribed to Symeon.

(21) Cf. Ware, *Church*, 102.

(22) Cf. Meyendorff, *Russia*, 119–24.

(23) Cf. manuscript *Mosc. Acad*. 3 (49) of I4th–15th centuries (the description in Leonid, *Svedeniya* i. 4); *Mosc. Acad*. 33 (154), 15th century [Leonid, *Svedeniya* ii. 133]; *Mosc. Acad*. 126 (470) and 127 (471), 15th century [Josiph, *Opis*, 87]. For Slavonic codices of Bulgarian provenance see Stoyanov and Kodov, *Opis*, 237.

(25) I therefore disagree with A. Lascaris, who says (on what basis?): 'it is difficult to believe that Symeon had any special place in Russia'; *Liberation*, p. xxxi.

(27) Cf. Tikhonravov, *Zhitiya*, 44–5.

(29) His biographer Epiphanius the Wise recounts many cases when divine fire visibly appeared and was seen by Sergius and his disciples: once the disciple saw the divine fire proceeding from his hand while he was giving a blessing; at another time the fire was seen descending into the chalice while Sergius was celebrating the Liturgy. Sergius is also reported as having seen the divine light: cf. Kologrivoff, *Ocherki*, 100.

(30) Cf. Prokhorov, 'Literatura', 320–1.

(31) On this polemic see Behr-Sigel, 'Nil'.

(32) Cf. Meyendorff, *Russia*, 273. On the influence of the Hesychasm on Nil see Davids, 'Nil'. For a general introduction into Nil's doctrine and spirituality see Maloney, *Nil*.

(33) The conflict arose around the question of the monastic ownership of land. The Possessors emphasized the social importance of monasticism, the need for pastoral care, help for the sick and poor, hospitality and teaching in schools: for these reasons the monasteries needed to have money, own land, and possess slaves. The Non- Possessors, on the contrary, spoke out against the transformation of monasticism into a social institution, insisting on the necessity to preserve the initial monastic ideal of deliberate poverty: see Kartachoff, *Istoria* i. 451–7; Ware, *Church*, 104–8.

(34) Cf. Pares, *Russia*, 93.

(35) *Rule* 1. 2; cf. Symeon, *Hymn* 13. 57 ff. Nil seems to quote from memory as the passage is given in an abbreviated form. Among other writings by Symeon which are quoted by Nil, there are *Hymn* 4 and *Cat*. 4, as well as the passage from Symeon included in the *Discourse* by Nikiphoros the Hesychast (see above). Though all these writings of Symeon were translated into Slavonic, Nil might well have read some of them in Greek as he learned this language on Mount Athos: see Kologrivoff, *Ocherki*, 170.

(37) For his life and spirituality see Spidlik, *Joseph*. The monastery of Joseph possessed a rich library, in which a large number of manuscripts contained the writings of Symeon: see Likhachiov, *Tsentry*, 32, 78–9, 348–9.

(39) Ware, *Church*, 100.

(40) On their life and teaching see Cavarnos, *Macarios*; idem, *Nicodemos*.

(41) See *Akolouthia*. The reprint of 1975 contains a critical text of this office [pp. 45–79], as well as the *enkomion* [81–114] written by Nikodimos. It also contains the *Canon* and the *Oikoi* in honour of Symeon [117–34] which are composed by Gerasimos Mikrayannitis.

(45) The prayer is written in anacreontic octametre, as many of Symeon's hymns, but it does not belong to the corpus of 'Hymns' as it exists in the manuscript tradition; on this sole basis I. Koder rejects its authenticity: *SC* 156. 21. However, a closer analysis of the text shows that many of its lines directly correspond to Symeon's authentic hymns: in particular, the lines 48–50, 54, 56–7, 66–8, 70, 73–6 of *Hymn* 17 are included into the prayer. So even if the prayer was not written by Symeon himself, it derives from him not only spiritually, but also textually: see Asmus, 'Hymns'.

(46) This rather free poetical translation is published in Elias, *Liturgy*, 278–87. For the Greek text see *Horologion*, 504–6.

(47) On his life and spiritual activity see Tchetverikov, *Paisy*; Hainsworth, *Paisy* (deals with his doctrine of spiritual direction); Kologrivoff, *Ocherki*, 347–64.

(48) On his activity and influence there see Joanta, *Roumanie*, 161–218.

(49) Among the followers of Paisy were the *startsi* ('elders') of the famous Optina monastery, who exercised an enormous influence on the spiritual life in Russia: see Kontsevich, *Optina*.

(53) Published in two volumes in 1890–92. Symeon's 'Hymns' were translated into Russian by Hieromonk Panteleimon (Uspensky) and published in 1917, on the eve of the Bolshevik revolution.

(54) There are many biographies of this famous Russian saint, but the most comprehensive collection of materials connected with his name is Chichagov, *Letopis*.

(56) See Introduction, n. 23.

(58) Silouan was a simple monk of St. Panteleimon's monastery on Mount Athos; he was recently canonized in the Orthodox Church. Sophrony was his disciple for fourteen years; later he became the founder of the Monastic Community of St. John the Baptist at Tolleshunt Knights, Essex (England).

(64) Bobrinskoy, 'Cabasilas', 505.

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